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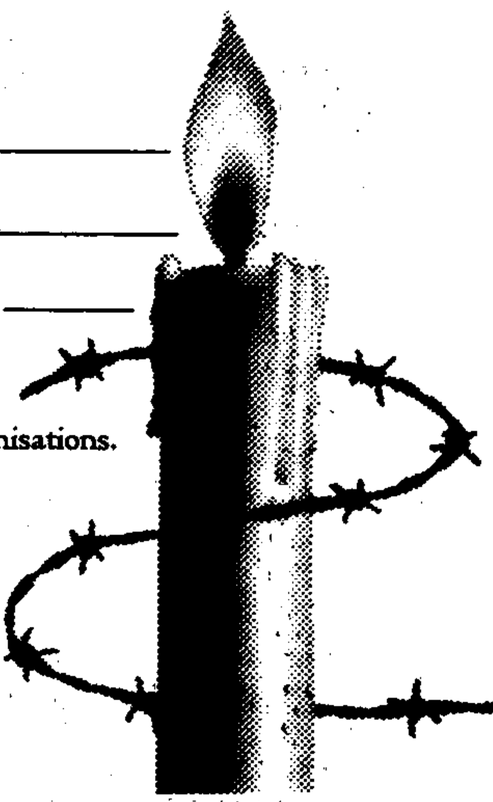

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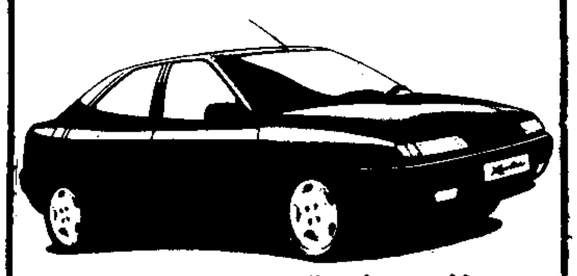

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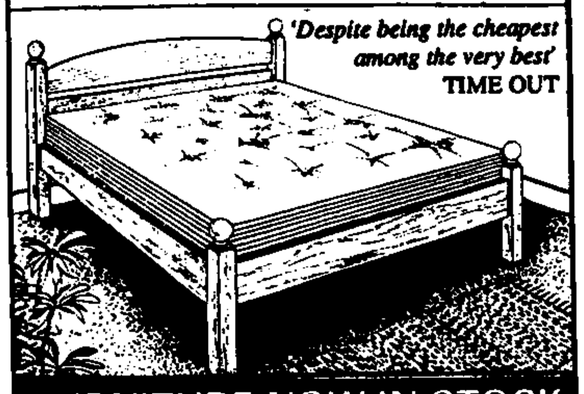

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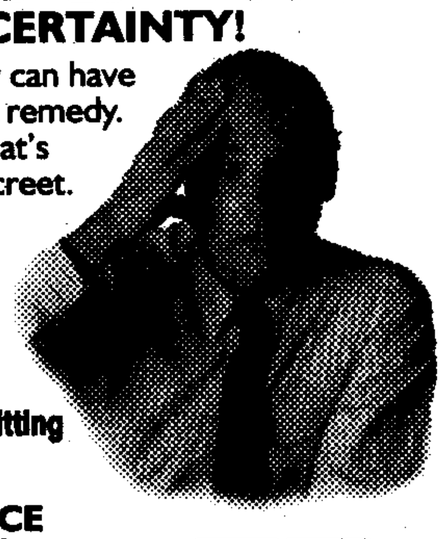

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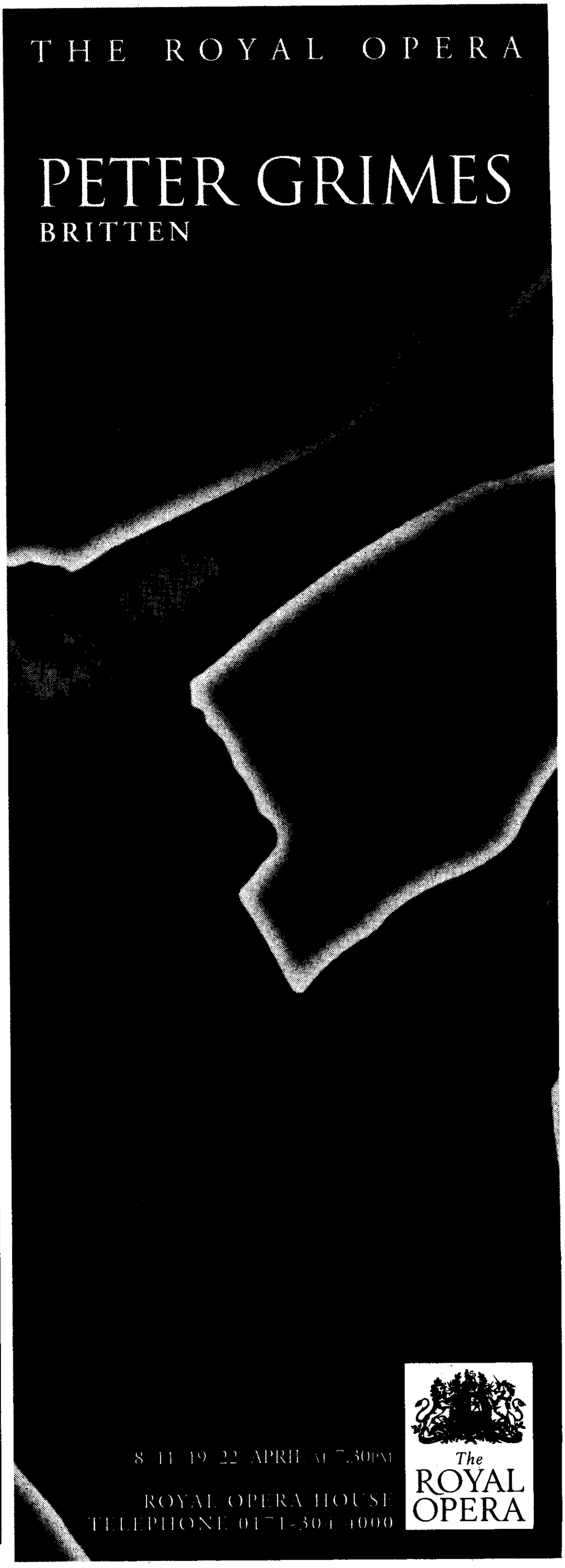

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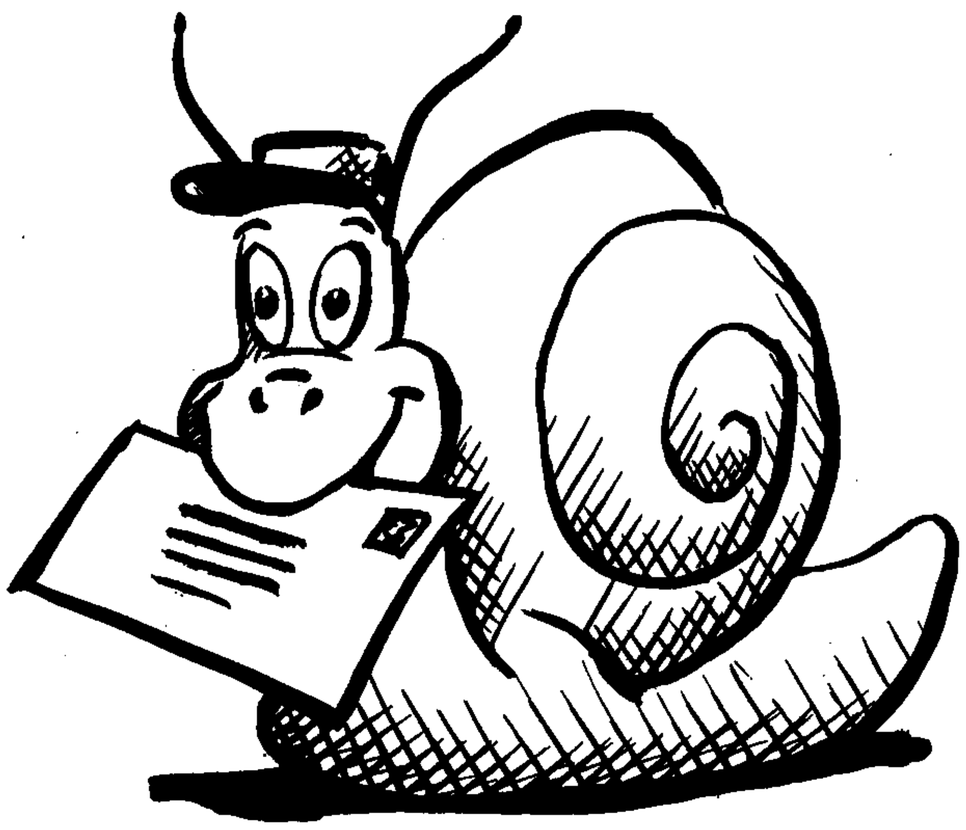

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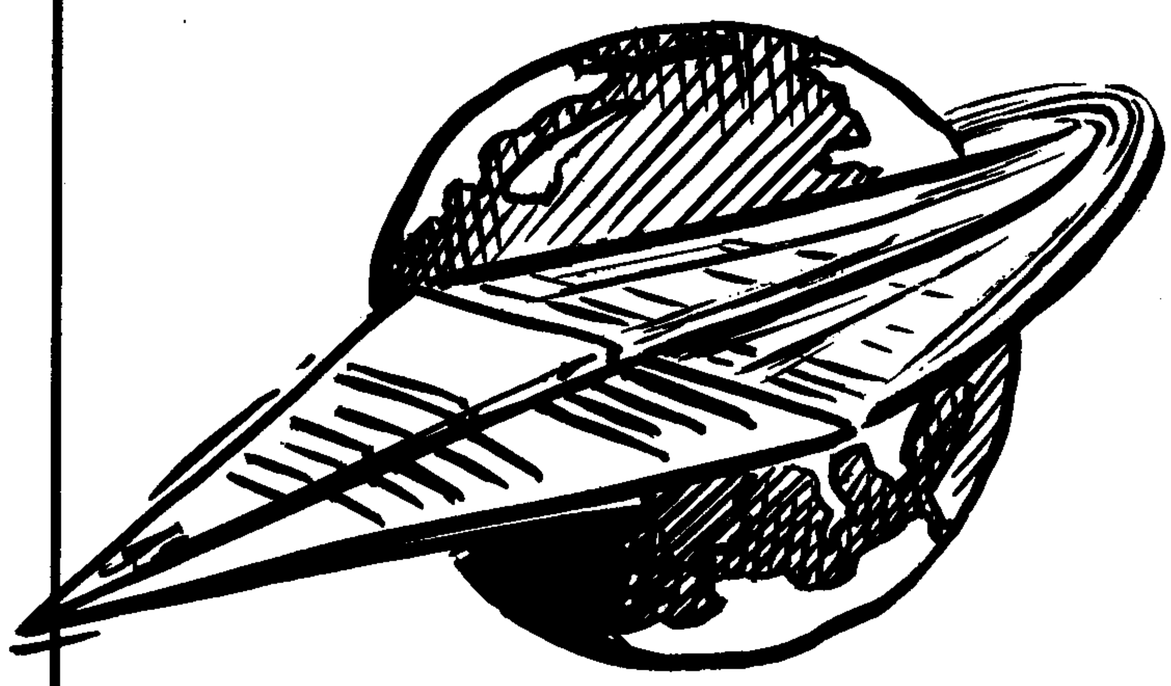

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Gnome

I UTTERLY deplore the sickening way in which Mr Peter Tatchell and his followers have been attempting to "out" eminent members of the Church of England.

A person's private life is their own affair. In particular, in the "grey" area of sexuality which one of us can honestly say that he or she is blameless?

It is nothing short of scandalous that an organisation can be devoted solely to the exposure and exploitation of the private peccadillos of public figures.

ON OTHER PAGES

The Dirty Old Man of Threadneedle Street 9, 10, 11, 12

Photos 14, 15, 16

Did Big Eddie Watch? asks the Eye . . . 26

MOTORING

We test-drive that chauffeur-driven Limo of Lust 94

Pound takes a tumble 95

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"I haven't seen you in Heaven lately, Vicar"

COLOUR SECTION

JOHN MAJOR's anxious new "softly softly" line with his nine whipless MPs has been brought about by a series of secret and very precise opinion polls carried out for the Tory party in the rebels' constituencies.

These have shown alarmingly high rates of support for the whipless wonders. In places like Billericay (Teresa Gorman), Ruislip (John Wilkinson) and Ludlow (Christopher Gill), the polls show that the MPs are *more* likely to keep their seats without the whip than with it. In only two cases (Sir Richard Body and Nicholas Budgen) do the polls show a narrow lead for an official Tory candidate over the rebel MP.

As these poll results filter back to the rebels, their resolve to continue to defy the government on European issues is stiffened. They are inclined not to vote against the government on what they see as opportunist Labour amendments to technical "take note" motions on Europe in the Commons; but if the issue debated makes a real difference — as with the VAT issue last year — they are gung ho for another sortie into the Labour lobby.

The nine are certainly not prepared to give the assurance needed to get the whip back: namely that they will not again vote against the government if an issue such as the fishing crisis re-emerges in a form that can be voted on. So Major's long day's night goes on — at least until the Scott report comes out in late June or early July.

MEANWHILE the same group which only just failed to secure the 33 MPs' signatures necessary to run the former trade minister Edward Leigh against John Major for the leadership last October is busy collecting signatures again.

They have more than six months to persuade MPs that any leader would be better at the next election than Mr Major. The *Sun* "reveals" that they have found their stalking horse, whom the *Sun* will not name — because he does not yet exist. But if the series of disasters of the last few weeks continue, there is no doubt that a horse will emerge — and it is unlikely to be such a long shot as Edward Leigh or Norman Lamont.

The traditional argument that has so far deterred the Eurosceptics from opposing Major — that his replacement will be the most virulent pro-European of them all, Michael Heseltine — is losing its force. Whatever the deep commitment to anti-federal principles, more and more MPs are being swayed exclusively by the greatest political principle of them all: the urgent need to stay in Parliament. Better to keep your seat under Hezza than lose it under anyone else.

CHARLES POLLARD, the chief constable of Thames Valley, believes the balance of justice has "shifted too far in favour of the accused and away from the victim". But there was little evidence of "balance" in his recent BBC2 programme *The Big Picture: Criminal Injustice*.

One of the experts he interviewed for the film was Ronald Thwaites QC, whom he heard speaking at last year's conference of chief police officers. Pollard's idea, apparently, was that he would persuade Thwaites to admit that defence barristers were wily, amoral characters who help crooks to escape justice.

During their interview, however, Thwaites comprehensively shot down every one of Pollard's assertions. Soon afterwards, he was informed that his contribution would not be used, because none of it "accorded with Charles Pollard's views". Or, as Thwaites informed the *Eye* last week: "He thought he could come along with his pet theories and put me to the sword. But he didn't like what I said, because I demonstrated how idiotic his ideas are."

Following a robust protest, Thwaites was then asked to sit on the studio panel which quizzed Pollard at the end of the film. But when he learned that this too was to be pre-recorded — and that his demolition of Pollard was therefore likely to end up on the cutting-room floor — the lawyer refused to have anything more to do with the programme, which he regarded as "a complete travesty".

"I don't know what chief constables think they've got to contribute," Thwaites tells the *Eye*. "They can't do their own job, and yet they're trying to tell us how to do ours."

GOOD news for the two Royal Ordnance employees who offered to sell 5,000 electric "riot" batons and 10,000 electric shields worth nearly £2 million when they should not have: both have kept their jobs.

The Royal Ordnance premises at British Aerospace (BAe) were used to demonstrate the hardware — favoured by such go-ahead torture regimes as Turkey and Saudi Arabia — and the offer was made on BAe note paper. The deal, arranged by Royal Ordnance sales director Philip Morris and general sales manager Martin Trengove, was hastily withdrawn, however, when the identity of the would-be purchasers was revealed: reporters from Channel 4's *Dispatches*.

Both Morris and Trengove were "disciplined" by their company after the programme was broadcast. But what did this entail?

"Morris has been suspended, that investigation is now complete, disciplinary action taken, and that's where the matter ends," said BAe's director of public affairs Hugh Colver CBE.

"The suspension ended when the investigation ended, and the decisions were made what to do. Within the normal rules of the company he was disciplined, and um, yes, he's still with the company." He added: "People might have thought there was the implication that he could have been dismissed, but that isn't what happened."

Even though the pair broke the 1968 firearms act, which prohibits handling such nasty devices? "It's an internal disciplinary matter and we wouldn't want to discuss what the charges were," said Mr Colver.

PS: Mr Colver is a previous press secretary at 10 Downing Street, and former press chief at the ministry of defence. His new job? Press officer for the Conservative party.

● *See Colver's First Stand, Footnotes, page 27.*

DESPERATE for funds to pay off its vast overdraft, the Tory party has formed a new club to "promote the party in a discreet way with the Far East business community".

Called the Dragon Club, it hosts cocktail parties at the fashionable East India Club and invites prominent Far Eastern businessmen to listen to the best and brightest the Tory party can provide.

The next speaker (who may or not be speaking on the importance of probity in public life) is Lord Archer (20 May); followed by Lord Howe (20 July); Michael Howard (21 September); John Wakeham (18 October); Peter Brooke (23 November); and at dates to be announced (assuming there is still a Tory government) Jeremy Hanley, Viscount Cranborne and Nicholas Soames (who will speak about the vital importance of selling arms to tolerant democracies such as China and Indonesia).

Street of Shame

THERE was consternation in the offices of the *Financial Times* as soon as the last issue of the *Eye* appeared.

It revealed that *FT* news editor Julia Cuthbertson had been sending faxes to a "chum" with hot advice on a possible takeover bid for Costain and its likely effect on the share price, and as we pointed out this seemed slightly at odds with a recent warning from editor Richard "Safe Hands" Lambert that *FT* hacks who passed on share tips to their friends would be "liable to summary dismissal".

Lambert acted swiftly. "Many of you will have seen the report in today's *Private Eye* about Julia Cuthbertson," he announced in an internal memo. "The facts are these. Some weeks ago, Julia was asked by a journalist friend whether the paper had carried any recent reports about Costain. She faxed him a precis of recent press reports. Her friend is deaf. She also faxed him some comments about how she saw the situation. Her motives were entirely innocent. But Julia recognises that her language and her actions represented a serious misjudgement. She has my complete confidence."

The suggestion that she was merely helping a fellow hack with a story is hardly borne out by her faxes, which were peppered with comments such as "I hope you make the right move at the right moment... sit tight... it would be nice to be extremely rich... I expect dinner somewhere terribly flash from the millions you make." And what on earth has the recipient's deafness got to do with anything?

Still, it is touching to learn that *FT* hacks who commit serious errors of judgement by share-tipping will nevertheless enjoy the "complete confidence" of their editor.

MICHAEL KEMP, the veteran motoring correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, is retiring at the end of this month. And he has gone out with a bang.

In France last month, while road-testing one of the new Bentley Azuras (which cost £250,000 apiece), he did a U-turn and forgot which side of the road he was meant to be driving on. The result: a head-on collision with a juggernaut, leaving the Azura with a badly smashed front wing and door.

Three years ago this same Michael Kemp wrote a long article for the *Mail* gloating over the misfortune of *Guardian* motoring hack John Samuel, who burned out the engine of a Jaguar XJ220 by changing into reverse gear at a speed of 100mph. The story, which ridiculed Samuel as a blundering oaf, was written "by *Daily Mail* motoring correspondent Michael Kemp, who returned his test car in perfect working order", as the paper smugly noted.

It seems only fair, then, to rebuke Kemp for his own incompetence — except that he's quite capable of doing so himself. "I'm hoisted by my own petard, am I not? he wailed last week, when the *Eye* tackled him on the subject. "I ask for and expect no mercy. I was an absolute fool. Take the piss out of me." Brooding on his imminent retirement, he added: "It's a somewhat ignominious way to go out."

He did, however, enter a few pleas in mitigation. First, it was an "enormous credit" to the car that it saved him from injury: "Rolls-Royce claims that the Azura is the safest cabriolet in the world, and I've proved that it is." Secondly, he isn't the only accident-prone motoring hack: he revealed that Eric Bailey of the *Daily Telegraph* recently drove over the safety barrier at a banked circuit, destroying a brand new Daimler. Finally, he pointed out that he had no previous convictions. "It's the first time I've turned on to the wrong side of the road on the continent in 35 years of driving."

Well, perhaps. But his record wasn't entirely unblemished, even befote the latest debacle. Back in the 1960s, Kemp travelled to the Geneva motor show in the new Triumph Spitfire Mark 2. On a road in northern France, he lurched on to the verge and rolled over at 80mph. The car was a complete write-off.

THESE are trying times for Ian Hargreaves, editor of the *Indescribablydoomed*, who discovered last week that his boss David "Rommel" Montgomery had graciously offered his job to Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill and Andrew "Son of Brillo" Jaspan.

Are his colleagues offering solace and support? Not exactly. At an *Indie* editorial conference the other day, business editor Jeremy Warner was asked to explain what had gone wrong with the ailing merchant bank Warburg's. Searching for an easily understandable comparison, Warner told the meeting that Warburg's was "rather like the *Independent*. In the late 1980s it was the best thing in the City, and all the best people wanted to work for it. But now all the best people have left and a lot of third-raters have come in".

To judge by the furious glares from Hargreaves' newly-recruited third-raters (Martin Jacques, David Aaronovitch, Charles Leadbeater and other refugees from *Marxism Today*), Warner's ingenious analogy was not universally appreciated.

PS: Montgomery's assurance to Hargreaves that his job is safe may prove to be the kiss of death. When Montgomery took over the *Daily Mirror*, he gave a similar assurance to the then editor Richard Stott. Two days later Stott was sacked.

THE tabloids were righteously indignant last week when Ivana Trump's fiancé dropped his trousers in the presence of the Duchess of York at a dinner for the charity Children in Crisis. But they neglected to mention the equally boorish behaviour of the *Daily Mirror*'s deputy editor, Brendan Parsons, at the same event.

After dinner Jeremy Beadle hosted a fundraising auction at which he invited bids for the evening's star prize — lunch with Fergie at the royals' favourite restaurant, San Lorenzo. When the bidding had reached £1,000, Parsons suddenly leapt to his feet and announced that he would pay £4,000 for "a fashion shoot" with the duchess. Beadle pointed out that this was not an offer, while Fergie and her colleagues on the top-table blushed with embarrassment.

Undaunted Parsons then entered the bidding for the lunch at San Lorenzo — which he duly won with an offer of £2,000, paid for on his credit card. Fergie is now said to be gritting her teeth in terrified anticipation of her meal *a deux* with the man from the *Mirror*. As well she might: it was, after all, the *Daily Mirror* which ran the famous photos of HRH receiving "financial advice" from Mr Johnny Bryan.

THE demise of Charles "Experienced" Golding, former deputy editor of the *Sunday Express*, is not quite complete. Although he is now signing on the dole, at the same time he is touting for business as a PR man. His name now appears in a brochure for an outfit called Communications International Media, along with his old chum Stan Myerson, who used to be second-in-command of the *Sunday Express's* advertising department.

Potential clients should study Golding's CV with care. The brochure boasts, for instance, that he was "a senior executive at TV-am" — an odd way to describe someone who worked as a researcher for Timmy Mallett's "Wide Awake Club". Another hitherto unknown facet of his career is his alleged role as "editor of several newspapers and magazines for specialist companies". Which companies? He does not say.

Golding's biography becomes ever more Archeresque as it proceeds. He says that, at the *Sunday Express*, he "set up and edited the award-winning Review magazine". One suspects that Lady Bollard, his former boss, will be none too pleased by this claim. Nor will Anna Stewart and David Sinclair, who were in fact the magazine's editors.

What is omitted from the otherwise extensive CVs in the brochure is that Myerson was sacked by Express Newspapers last year for "gross misconduct" and Golding left under a heavy cloud (see *Eyes passim*).

THE sickly Daily Depress, itself in dire need of treatment, is looking for a new medical correspondent.

Tragically the previous incumbent, Peter Anderson, succumbed to a severe attack of the socially-transmitted Fleet Street disease, *fiddlus expensii*.

Anderson claimed liberal reimbursement from his employers for taking an Indian doctor out to a curry luncheon. Alas for the bumbling hack, the *Express*'s grim managing director Andrew Cameron knew this particular Indian doctor and was well aware that he couldn't stand curries. Anderson was instantly vindalooed.

Private I-I-I!

THIS MONTH'S rundown of the nation's most self-obsessed columnists, based on the number of incidences of the word "I" per column-inch).

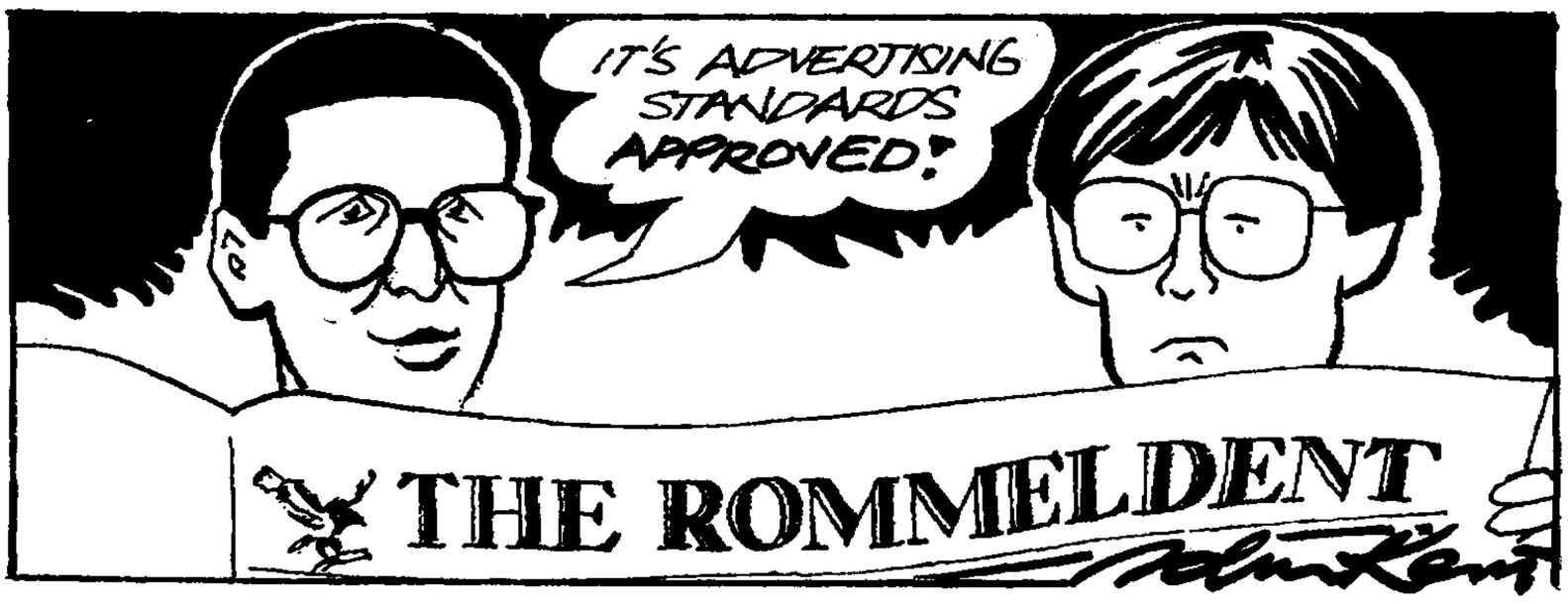
		Ego Rating
1	Zoë Heller (Sunday Times 19/3)	2.59
2	Justine Picardie (IoS 19/3)	2.17
3	Bernard Ingham (Daily Express 14/3)	2.11
4	Michael Winner (Sunday Times 19/3)	1.81
5	Alan Coren (Times 15/3)	1.54
6	Quentin Crisp (Guardian 10/3)	1.14
7	William Donaldson (Independent 18/3)	1.04
8	Bernard Levin (Times 10/3)	0.83
9	Jonathan Miller (Sunday Times 19/3)	0.78
10	Harry Enfield (IoS 19/3)	0.73

Bubblin' under: Carol Sarler, Glenda Jackson, Barry Took, Peregrine Wortshorne.

I-TV

This issue's winning reviewer is... A.A. Gill (Sunday Times 19/3).
Mentions of self: 21
Programmes reviewed: 4

Rommet



HALLO!

THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! AT the Heathrow VIP hospitality suite, I bump into Sir Denis Thatcher. Just back from Austria, the slightly tipsy old cove confides he has been "writing" his life story with the jolly Thatcher girl, Carol. This will be the publishing sensation of the century!

Denis spent two weeks in Klosters, where Carol shares a flat with her ski-instructor "toy-boy" Marco Gross, 13 years her junior. Writing, the great man divulges, is a doddle: "Lashings of G 'n' T and you just talk into a tape-recorder."

Hardly a word about the troublesome Mark; and even less of Maggie's tiresome time at Downing Street. No, winks Denis, simply pots of amusing golfing anecdotes. The provisional title? *The 19th Hole*. And the clever publishers who have paid Denis and Carol a whopping advance? None other than philanthropic Mr Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins, which publishes Maggie's memoirs!

HALLO! TO DINNER with the pulchritudinous Duchess of York and her dashing young companion, Johnny Bryan.

Johnny informs me that he has *all* the notorious photographs of himself and Fergie *in flagrante* in the South of France, because he thinks they are "so beautiful". But he is keen to put the record straight on one point.

Contrary to what has been alleged by tabloid guttersnipes, he did not give Her Royal Highness a "toe-job". He was, he tells me, "kissing the arch of her foot".

HALLO! TO BROMLEY, in Kent, where the Marquesa takes part in a delightful war game at a club called Quasar. We all put on helmets and amusingly pretend to "liquidate" one another with laser guns!

The winner of the prestigious Top Gun award goes to a Mr Garry Bushell, brilliant TV critic of the effervescent *Sun* newspaper. The winsome scribe apparently visits this academic centre at least four times a week where he leads a crack team called "The Hard Core Crew".

Such proletarian wit!

HALLO! HER Majesty, and her entourage, thank God, are still above the law. Magistrates in Gravesend have loyally declared that royal lackeys do not need to appear as witnesses in a case even when they were, er, witnesses.

For when Brenda visited Gravesend recently (*Eye* 865), a woman scattered satirical spoof banknotes as she drove by. Inspector Knacker promptly seized Mrs Gill Emerson, and charged her with a litter offence.

On 6 March Mrs Emerson applied for witness summons for the Hon. Mary Morrison (lady-in-waiting); David Griffin (chauffeur); and Superintendent Peter Prentice (bodyguard). She explained that they had witnessed the "crime". After retiring for an hour, the magistrates returned to declare that they considered this evidence was not needed.

Mrs Emerson can now safely expect to be executed for her treason.

"Just tell the Count that 'Hello!' magazine isn't used to being kept waiting"

HALLO! *THOSE poor, poor Baring boys. Five titles between them and hardly a bank to spare. Fortunately, however, darling Frank Baring, Lord Northbrook, has a little something to fall back on.*

For the Barings charming Bishopsgate headquarters had one of the most magnificent collections of art in the City, including a particularly engaging Gainsborough. But those Dutch philistines ING, the Marquesa is delighted to report, will not be able to get their hands on these masterpieces, because they are owned by the family — with canny little Frank in the forefront!

The Marquesa

FOOTBALL FOCUS

SOMEWHAT bizarrely, sales of Eric Cantona souvenirs are booming. Since his recent troubles the French philosopher-footballer has become a cult figure.

This is partly as a result of Manchester United's desire to make as much money as possible from merchandising. Cantona products are pouring off the production line, and the March issue of the club's glossy magazine features the player on the front cover (with the first five pages devoted to largely adulatory coverage of Cantona's martial arts exhibition).

Earlier this year Tony Blair attacked the cost of supporting premier league football generally and, in particular, Man Utd. Blair quite reasonably highlighted the enormous cost of the club's replica strips, especially the junior versions. For a child the complete outfit retails at a mere £48.97, admittedly a substantial discount on the adult top, shorts and socks which total £63.97.

Naturally, however, children in particular demand the latest outfit and United has issued six different versions over the last three years, including this year's new kit which so irritated Blair (but not including another new away outfit due out at the end of this season).

Behind this lucrative business is United's merchandising manager Edward Freedman, a refugee from Spurs. Based at Old Trafford, he controls a multi-million pound business which ranges from the production of match videos, continental quilts, wallpaper and books, together with a mail order business and a growing chain of superstores.

Freedman tenaciously defends United's copyright and is anxious to ensure that outside companies who might produce less expensive goods are deterred from such terrible deeds.

This does mean that children in particular end up paying more than they otherwise might. But Freedman is by no means insensitive to the needs of children. In fact his own son James is the editor of the Cantona-worshipping United magazine. And young Freedman's company, Zone Ltd, has exclusive rights to produce a range of team products...

THERE is something distinctly odd about the *Sun*'s coverage of the alleged soccer bribes scandal.

Somehow or other hacks from the paper were waiting outside Bruce Grobbelaar's house when the police arrived to deliver a photo opportunity — or "dawn raid" as professionals call them.

The following day 10 pages of the *Sun* were devoted to the story, boasting of the paper's intimate involvement. This began back in November when Grobbelaar's former business partner Chris Vincent helped the paper to set the Southampton goalie up. *Sun* reporters were present when the two men met in a flat equipped with hidden cameras and allegedly discussed fixing a match.

Vast publicity followed, culminating now in the arrest, not just of the Zimbabwean but also of Aston Villa striker John Fashanu and three others.

Helpfully the *Sun* provided an explanation for the latest development in its 15 March 1995 edition. Under the heading "I Saw Fash With The Cash," readers were told that "a claim that John Fashanu was present when Bruce Grobbelaar picked up a £40,000 payment for throwing a match is at the centre of the police investigation..."

"Chris Vincent alleges he saw [Fashanu] when he accompanied Grobbelaar... to collect the money. Vincent told in a sworn affadavit [to the *Sun*] how he travelled to a... mansion in exclusive Hampstead, north London."

Guy Patrick and John Troup's story then went on to claim that this mansion belonged to Fashanu and linked Vincent's allegation to the police raids.

What's odd about this is that John Fashanu was, until a few days before his arrest, under contract to the *Sun* as a columnist. Indeed, back in November the paper helpfully paid a £6,000 fine imposed by the Football Association on Fashanu for suggesting that Eric Cantona was less than a complete gentleman.

Fashanu's column appeared right through the period when Patrick and Troup's original stories were featured in the *Sun* last year. Their latest piece refers to Fashanu's showbiz and property interests — but makes no mention of his weekly *Sun* column, something regular readers must regard as just a little odd.

All this begs an interesting question: did Vincent mention Fashanu when he set Grobbelaar up for the *Sun* last year? If he did, why didn't the allegation appear then? If not, how credible can his claims be considered now? Perhaps the *Sun*'s "source" in the Hampshire constabulary should be asking the paper for an explanation, rather than simply tipping off Patrick and Troup when arrests are imminent.

IT WASN'T only the *Sun* that had advance warning of the theatrical dawn raid on Grobbelaar's house. Every second of the goalie's humiliating departure was witnessed by about 50 hacks, photographers and TV crews.

The notable exception was the BBC, whose reports of the arrest were accompanied by bland pictures of his deserted house and the exterior of Southampton police station — much to the fury and embarrassment of executives at Television Centre.

Why was the BBC not tipped off? Perhaps Hampshire constabulary's chief press officer, Richard Horrobin, has the answer. He used to be head of BBC South... until the Birtists ditched him.

IN THE TEAROOM

AT THIS time of year there's nothing like a spot of candour to set the tearoom in jitters.

Michael Heseltine is just about allowed to say we're still suffering "the backwash of recession" because the average punter won't know what he's talking about. But for the chancellor to say the feel-good factor is two years off, that's a gaffe — despite the fact that it's been the tearoom consensus for months.

There is a simple explanation. Even more than he fears and loathes the opposition, the average Tory MP fears and loathes the leading lights of his own constituency association. Though he'll pay fulsome tribute at the agm to "selfless work" and "untiring commitment", he knows that what these people really want out of politics is a seat on the council. This gives them the position necessary to justify their self-importance.

In May many of these municipal grandees are going to get chucked out. In the tearoom MPs are already complaining about being cornered after surgery by ghastly, tweedy women and flash property dealers who think Ken Clarke has sabotaged their chances of a seat on the roads and drains committee. Some dream of taking David Mellor's lead and telling the local awkward squad straight out that they're a bunch of cretins. Most though, want the dismal economic news hushed up and have taken to quoting the prophet Samuel to ministers: *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice.*

A puzzled Ken Clarke is even now cloistered with his adviser discussing the situation of the Gath steelworks and the nappy-factory at Askelon.

'Urquhart'

HUMBUG OF THE WEEK

1 Which Labour MP said in June 1976: "For the first time since the war we have all the conditions for export-led growth. We have a tough pay policy and world trade is moving up. Exporting is now very profitable"?

2 Which SDP MP told the Commons in March 1981: "The Labour party no longer has anything to offer the country. The Tories, needless to say, are useless"?

3 Which Alliance MP said in May 1982: "The Labour party is lunacy and inflation-prone on one side. The Conservative party means total inaction over unemployment on the other"?

4 Which Conservative candidate said in February 1987: "The Alliance is a Mark Two Labour party, going down the path of higher public spending and higher taxes"?

5 Which Conservative MP told the Commons on 2 March 1994: "Whether we are talking about small or large industries, the whingeing and snivelling opposition is backward-looking and wholly irrelevant. We the Conservatives are winners once again!"?

ANSWERS

1-5 Er, John Horam MP, appointed Conservative parliamentary secretary for public services and science on 6 March 1995.

"Look, I know this might sound a bit like the politics of envy..."

MICHAEL PORTILLO's private secretary Jenny Curtis has sent an urgent memo to senior civil servants at the department of employment. "People have been asking for guidance on the Secretary of State's stylistic preferences," she reveals.

Aha! But, alas, it isn't what you think. "The Secretary of State's main concern," she explains, "is that the letters he signs should be grammatically correct." Portillo is so "concerned", indeed, that he has asked Ms Curtis to compose a five-page document listing his desires and demands.

"The Secretary of State does not like to use 'people' for 'staff'," she writes. " 'People' in that context often appears in ES drafts because Mike Fogden [*Who he? - Ed.*] likes to use it. Drafts prepared for Mr Fogden's signature should continue to use 'people'. Those prepared for the Secretary of State's signature should not."

Not a people person, then. Does Portillo have any other peccadillos? You bet. The employment secretary "does not like capitals to be overused". He can't abide split infinitives, or misplaced apostrophes, or prepositions at the end of sentences. Vogue phrases such as "meet with" are strictly *verboten*. "The Secretary of State does not meet with people. He meets them."

Finally, Portillo likes to use "measured" language (except when speaking about foreigners, presumably). "If asked, for example, to endorse a booklet, he would be content to describe it as 'well-researched', or 'interesting'. He would not be prepared to say that it was 'absolutely fascinating', or that it 'set the scene for the next century' — unless, of course, it really did. In short, gushing enthusiasm is out. The Secretary of State is generally 'pleased' rather than 'delighted', and 'interested' rather than 'fascinated'."

We had noticed.

"WITH the help of our partners the Mirror Group," announced Tony Blair in that great popular organ, "we are taking politics back to the people."

This is the dazzlingly clever "Rolling Rose" campaign, which will trundle round Britain attempting to gather voters for Labour and readers for the ailing newspaper. And the awesome "Rolling Rose" prize for readers is nothing less than "tea with Tony Blair, followed by dinner with John Prescott".

The deputy leader himself wrote a stirring article in the *Mirror*, thundering: "We've had enough of bosses awarding themselves fat pay rises and massive share options while staff have their wages cut."

This is not thought to be a reference to the *Daily Mirror*, where David Montgomery and his directors have, er, allocated massive share options while sacking staff, smashing the union and introducing cheap, new labour.

'Backbiter'

QUANGO NEWS

COME on down Mike Robinson, head of the new and totally crap quango, Ministry of Defence Homes.

The government has agreed to bung Mr Robinson a handy £206,000 severance pay — not bad given that he was only recruited last September from Bristol city council.

Robinson was meant to have organised the sell-off of almost 100,000 empty MoD properties, but the scheme has been ditched because the banks refuse to invest in dilapidated buildings, many of them boasting asbestos fittings and structural problems.

Mr Robinson, having done nothing for six months at public expense, is now to receive almost a quarter of a million to do nothing permanently! But as with all "privatisations" there are plenty of other winners, too.

A lottery-sized payout of almost £2 million in wasted fees is being shared between NatWest (whose directors include former Thatcher adviser Charles Powell and former minister Baroness Young) and Coopers & Lybrand (paid parliamentary advisers: MPs David Howell and Eric Pickles).

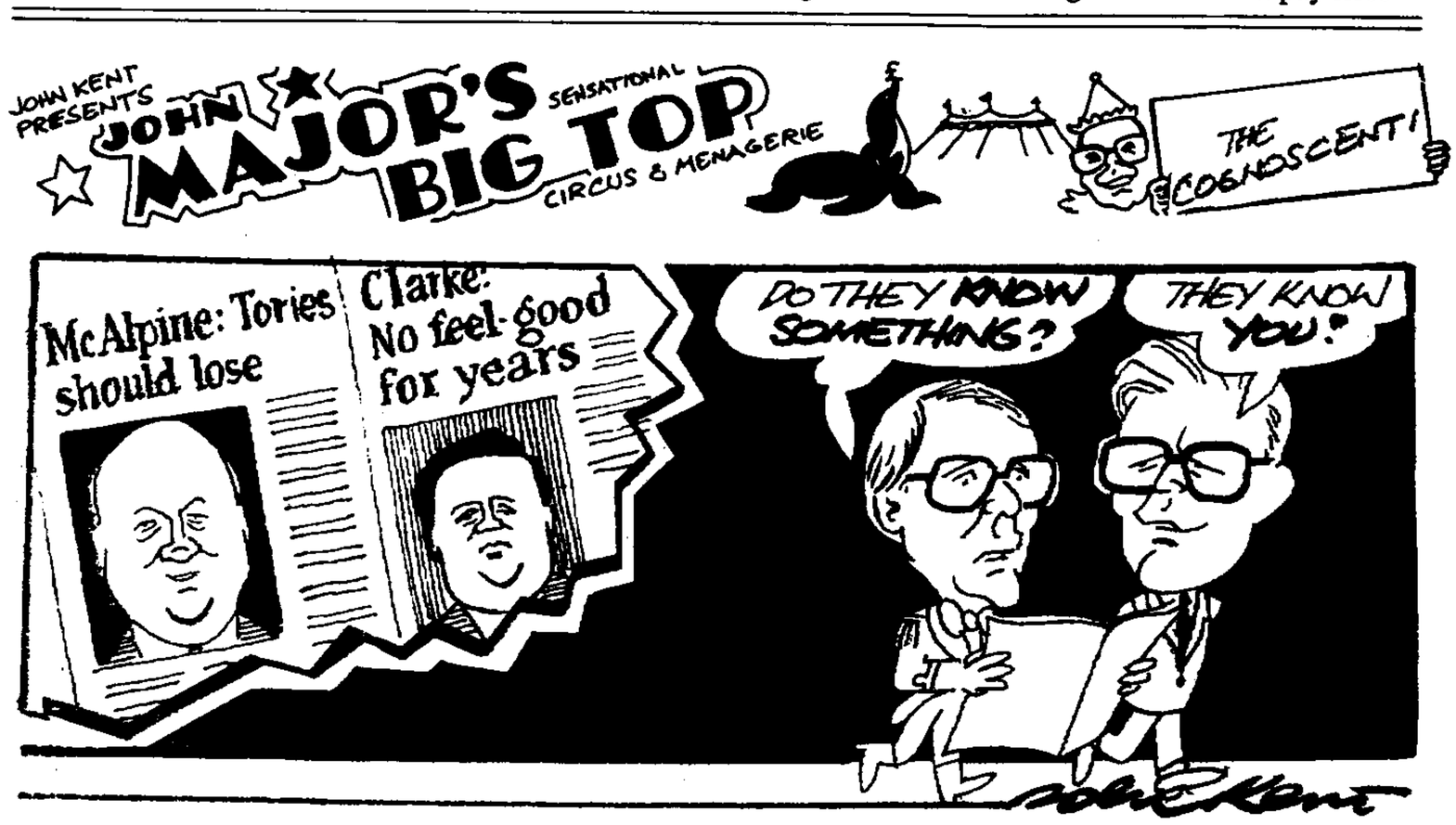
As a Coopers spokeswoman told the *Eye* piously: "That sort of information should be confidential." Of course it should — it's only public money, after all.

QUANGO queen Elaine Murphy, who has sat on two NHS trusts, now has her eye on the chairmanship of the newly-formed City and Hackney Community Services. Unfortunately Murphy, who is also professor of psychiatry at Guys' and St Thomas', doesn't have a squeaky clean CV.

Her appointment to the North West London Mental Health NHS trust turned out to be unlawful and she had to resign. However, as she points out in her CV, Virginia Bottomley got round the problem by reappointing her as an "associate member".

In her CV she also claims that she is steeped in the culture of the East End of London. This rings a little hollow next to her admission that she has three homes: one in Lucca, one in Norfolk, and one in the City of London. And the fact that she also wants to close Barts hospital, which currently serves 100,000 people in Hackney, is unlikely to endear her to local people.

In her letter, Murphy asks for her application to be viewed with the utmost discretion. She writes: "I am aware that I would need to resign my academic position to enable me to undertake a chairing role. For that reason I am sure you will appreciate that this expression of interest is in strictest confidence — the NHS being as 'leaky' a place as a torpedoed frigate."



NOOKS and CORNERS

SO, Mr Jocelyn Stevens, CVO, chairman of English Heritage, welcomes the ministerial announcement that in future the owners of buildings will be consulted before they are listed, so making the system more "democratic".

This breathtaking subservience to government policy is not so much a case of a gamekeeper turned poacher as sheer treachery, as it undermines the role and status of the organisation he ornaments.

He is, of course, merely abetting the sinister aims of Stephen Dorrell and the Conservative party. From time immemorial the latter has disliked any attempt to stop the wealthy destroying beautiful buildings or to impede developers in their duty to make as much money as possible, regardless of the public interest.

The idea that Stevens might defend the knowledge and expertise of his staff is laughable. I doubt if he begins to understand what they do, or that it is the very nature of the listing process to be one jump ahead of public opinion — a public opinion which, in the 193Os, was content for the best of Georgian London to disappear and which, in the 1960s, thought all Victorian buildings hideous. Some know better.

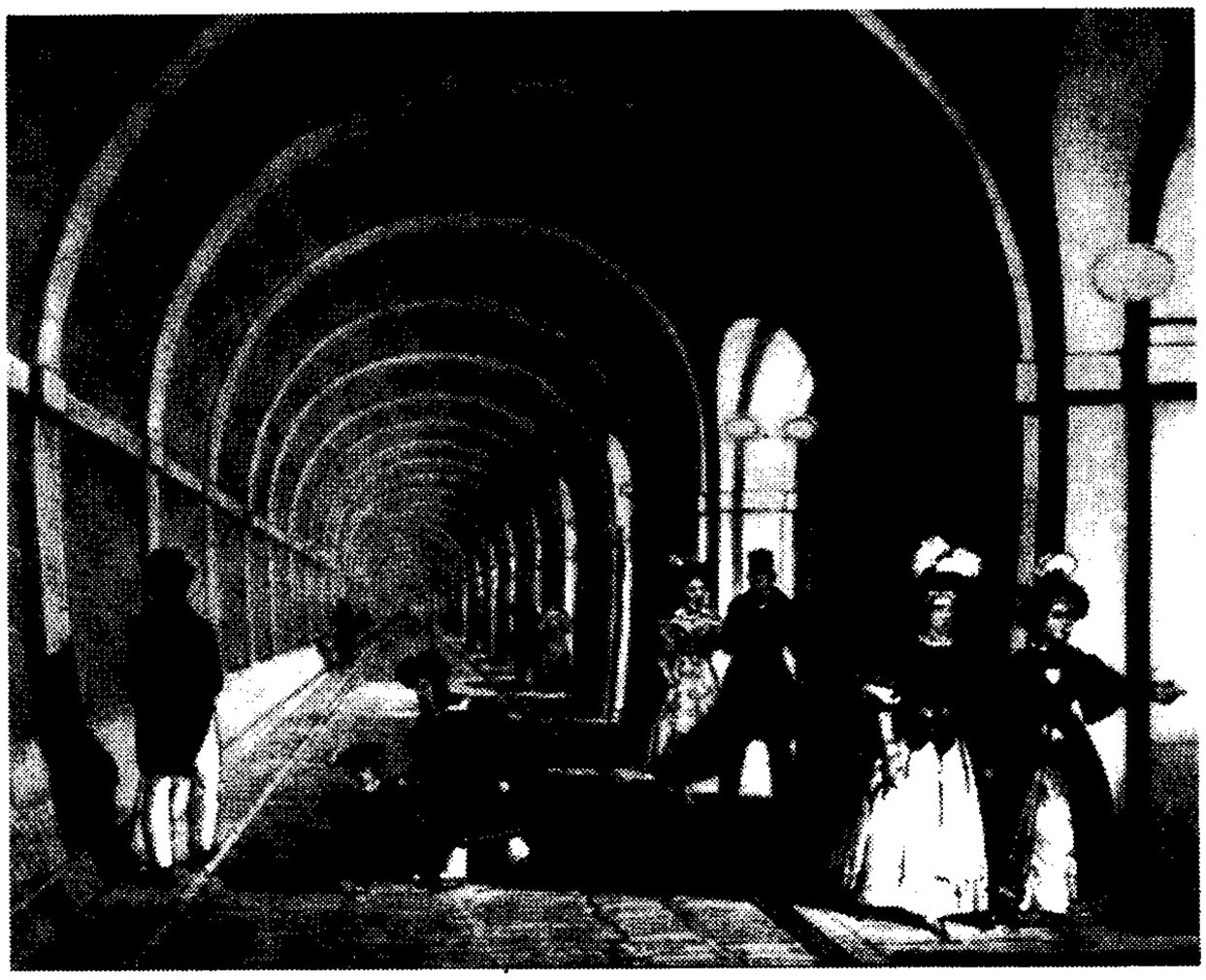
The whole strength of the English listing system since the 1944 and 1947 town and country planning acts is that it attempts to make objective assessments of architectural and historical importance regardless of financial values (which are arbitrary) and the opinions of owners (which are often nefarious when not fatuous). Listing was not intended to, and does not stop redevelopment; it merely provides a necessary pause for thought and reconsideration.

In countries like Belgium fewer buildings are protected because owners are consulted and because listing obliges the government to offer grant aid. Is that what our government wants? Surely not: especially as at present the taxation system is designed to encourage the spoiling of historic buildings.

If Dorrell gets his way, Britain will get the worst of both worlds, losing the informed objectivity of the existing system without acquiring the virtues of Continental methods. But, of course, the aim of this bogus reform is to emasculate English Heritage and so to benefit the friends of the Conservative party, among whom, we presume, Mr Stevens is numbered.

THAT MORE, not fewer, obscure structures deserve to be listed — regardless of the opinions of their owners — is shown by the sad case of the "Great Bore" under the Thames.

Built, after 18 years of great struggle, this first Thames Tunnel was a pioneering triumph of British engineering. In fact its engineer was born in France:



Sir Marc Brunel, the brilliant father of the great Isambard Kingdom, who here exploited the invention of the tunnelling shield.

The tunnel from Wapping to Rotherhithe was finally opened in 1843. A million visitors used it within 18 weeks of the opening but, in the end, it was not a financial success. In 1865 the twin brick-lined tunnels were bought by the East London Railway and steam trains began using it in 1869. Today the tunnel accommodates the East London branch of the Metropolitan line, but the character of Brunel's engineering feat is still evident.

Now London Underground wants to spoil it, just as it has spoilt so many serviceable and interesting stations. A design and build contract has been awarded for "major flood mitigation" work which involves "shotcreting" a 20cm layer over the original brickwork. This might seem unimportant except to historians of engineering, but we really ought to be as proud of our engineering triumphs as we are of our architectural monuments. Besides, several engineers argue that this shotcreting is unnecessary and that isolated leaks in the tunnelling can be plugged and that grouting behind the lining would be cheaper.

Perhaps the Thames Tunnel should be listed? Many believe it should, and English Heritage has considered the possibility. James Sutherland, the consulting engineer and engineering historian who is a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, argues that before the shotcreting starts there ought to be "a thorough public debate with English Heritage... It seems to be totally wrong to alter a structure of such historic engineering importance in such a way. Unless it is absolutely necessary it should be left as it is." Quite.

Of course the tunnel ought to be listed. But if Messrs Dorrell and Stevens had their way, London Underground would be consulted and would be unlikely to agree. And our government is unlikely to be concerned about the historic (and practical) importance of old brickwork; after all, it is happy to let the Forth Bridge, that supreme triumph of British railway engineering, rust away so the railway system can be shut down north of Edinburgh. All in the public interest, naturally; that is what our democracy is all about.

'Piloti'

Pseuds Corner

Why do men cry? Because of the fights and feats and marathon preferment, because they want their mothers, because they are blind in time, because of all the hard-ons they have to whistle up out of the thin blue yonder, because of all that men have done. Because they can't be happy or sad any more — only smashed or nuts. And because they don't know how to do it when they're awake.

And then there is the information which comes at night.

MARTIN AMIS
The Information, p.38

There aren't many ways for one writer to hurt another. Even if the literary world were as hopelessly corrupt as some people like to think it is, a writer cannot seriously damage a rival. This is the unwelcome conclusion reached by Richard Tull, failed novelist, when he contemplates the agonising success of his best friend (and worst enemy) Gwyn Barry. A scathing review, a scurrilous profile? Such things might hurt Gwyn Barry, but they wouldn't *hurt* him. So Richard Tull is obliged to look elsewhere, to the weapons of the outside world — seductions and succubi, hoaxes, mind games, frame-ups, sabotage — until at last Richard finds what he is looking for; a true professional — someone who hurts people in exchange for cash.

In *The Information*, Martin Amis returns to the big picture of *Money* and *London Fields*. The book takes in the whole of society, with the possible exception of the middle classes. This leaves us with the very rich, the very desperate, and the very bohemian. Comedy, the author has said, is the only genre with any future: it is all that's left. So *The Information* is a comedy that goes where comedy shouldn't normally go, into the territories abandoned by romance, by satire and by tragedy.

Jacket blurb
The Information

Martin Amis's new novel is about a widely-acclaimed author who receives a huge advance and is resented by his peers.

Now where do you suppose he got that idea?

Martin Amis is probably the most brilliant and controversial writer of the age. In advance of the publication of his new novel, Saturday's Guardian has an exclusive interview with the author. Then on Sunday, the Observer is previewing extracts from his book *The Information*. So tell everyone you're not going to be around this weekend. You're spending it with Martin Amis.

Advertisement
Guardian

CONTRIBUTOR: Lord Gnome

£10 paid for entries

"Have you seen that new Demi Moore film yet, Simon?"

A complaint against Emma Freud's Radio 1 show was also upheld after a listener criticised an item discussing the number of calories in semen.

Perceptions of unfairness accounted for almost a quarter of all criticism, closely followed by poor taste. *Independent*

EYE TV

World In Action (ITV)
Panorama (BBC1)

ONLY very rarely these days do the rival flagship current affairs programmes — ITV's *World In Action* and the BBC's *Panorama* — tackle the same subject on the same night: as happened last Monday, when the two shows screened their analyses of the Barings scandal.

World In Action has increasingly been fighting for its place in the early evening schedules — pushed towards more gimmicks and tabloid-like stories — and the news that Marcus Plantin (nickname: Plankton) may assume sole responsibility for ITV commissioning and scheduling is scarcely encouraging for its future. Meanwhile **Panorama** — for all John Birt's talk of the need for more serious and analytical current affairs programming — has fallen victim to Alan Botney's need for ratings and has been handed over to king of populism, Steve Hewlett.

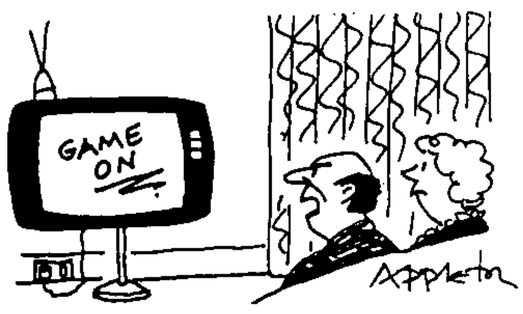
His ludicrous "mock trial" of Private Lee Clegg, hero of the *Daily Mail*-reading classes, put the BBC in the extraordinary position of having to release a statement correcting newspaper reports that the programme contained any new information on Clegg's case, and admitting that it was merely a piece of theatre. Subsequent "people-led" documentaries have raised similar fears.

The story of Barings and Nick Leeson is, though, an old-fashioned major story of the kind that would once have been the simple cue for *World In Action* and *Panorama* to produce serious, investigative editions. So how did they do?

Inevitably certain elements were present in both programmes. There was near-identical footage of the Watford council house in which Leeson grew up. Both shows played the same trick on a clip of Leeson on the floor of the Singapore stock exchange — colourising his striped jacket in black and white film — and both had soundbite-alike interviews with the chairman of the Securities and Futures Authority in London. Researchers on both teams had dug up the story that Leeson was refused a licence to trade in London because of failure to disclose a county court conviction.

The main difference, perhaps surprisingly, was that the ITV version was the lower-tech, lower-budget attempt. *World In Action* stayed in London, relying on archive footage of Singapore. For *Panorama*, however, reporter Jane Corbin had flown to Singapore and performed a piece-to-camera while being served a drink by a dusky handmaiden.

The BBC also staged dramatic reconstructions: a favourite Hewlett tool. An actor sat at a computer screen in a spookily-lit



"Oh God! Not another zitcom"

office, reenacting Leeson's alleged transactions. When Corbin referred to a Barings executive having flown to Singapore, a plane was shown landing and a suitcase seen being carried through an airport. When Corbin referred to the London executive having dined with Leeson, a glass was seen to be raised to the lips of a man. Thus did Hewlett's populist instincts help out those viewers who failed to understand the difficult phrases like "had a meal". ITV had only one reconstruction: a walking pair of legs and a pack of corgis to illustrate the presence among Barings' customers of Her Maj the Queen.

Overall the BBC film was vastly superior — in presentation and information — but what was depressing about both was the extent to which they failed to trust the simple power of the story. Can we really have reached a stage at which executives can't understand the grip of a tale about the breaking of an ancient bank in one transaction?

World In Action was by far the worst offender. The premise of the programme was not what happened and why or the need for greater financial regulation but the shamelessly people-led: "How safe is *your* money?" The film began with the Catholic charity for the disabled, Aspire, and ended with the Catholic school Downside, both of which had their funds stashed with Barings. Was the director a left-footer? Or did the programme really think that the only way of interesting viewers in the Barings/Leeson story was by whipping up some sympathy for the disabled and monks?

Similarly it was just about permissible to describe the story as "like a real-life thriller" — it is just that — but *World In Action* nervously backed up its claim with a lengthy interview from Michael Ridpath, author of the non-real-life financial thriller, *Free To Trade*. The programme was quite good on the need for speculators to "hedge their bets", but then it was itself an illustration of the journalistic equivalent of that tactic.

Dismayingly, even *Panorama* felt that the tale needed more "human interest" and narrative gimmicks. The Pet Shop Boys were singing about money on the soundtrack. There was a bizarre diversion in which a member of the Singapore Cricket Club told Corbin about some "rowdy behaviour" in which Leeson was allegedly involved. In this sequence, you could virtually hear Hewlett muttering in the cutting room: "We need some more bio stuff on Leeson, human interest."

And so one of the few stories that needed no help at all was endlessly hindered by it all. It would, on this evidence, be unwise to buy shares in current affairs television. Your money would not be safe at all.

'Square Eyes'

"I've just had a great someone else's idea"

MEDIA NEWS

STAFF on the BBC's ailing science programme *Tomorrow's World* are exasperated at the Thatcherite activities of new presenter Carol Vorderman.

First she negotiated a fee in excess of £120,000 — three times as much as her talented predecessor, Judith Hann. Then she insisted on keeping her job as a hostess on the Channel Four game show, *Countdown*. But what is baffling colleagues is that recently Carol has been advertising Ariel washing powder on television in a *Tomorrow's World*-type studio — in complete contravention of the BBC's guidelines on factual programming, which strictly bans the endorsement of products.

Mumbles an embarrassed BBC spokesperson: "Her contract with Ariel pre-dated her contract with *Tomorrow's World*."

Genius Carol's fee from Ariel? Not unadjacent to £50,000.

A MEMO from the controller of BBC editorial policy set out the problems of using swearwords on television. Just in case staff didn't get the message, it ended with a solemn table showing the percentage chance of the words being offensive:

Table of Swearwords
(words ranked according to strength)

	%		%
Fuck	92	Shit	28
Cunt	92	Piss	23
Motherfucker	90	Tosser	22
Wanker	62	Jesus	21
Nigger	56	Bugger	17
Bastard	50	God	15
Prick	49	Crap	12
Arsehole	48	Git	10
Bollocks	43	Pillock	9
Spastic	41	Bloody	6
Twat	34	Damn	3

modern times
THE BBC HAS SHOWN A MAN DYING ON TELEVISION...
BUT IN A WAY THAT CAUSED LITTLE DISQUIET TO THOSE WHO WATCHED IT...
AS HE'S BEEN DOING IT EVERY WEEK
THE DANNY BAKER SHOW
Ken Pyne

CHANNEL 4's *Cutting Edge* series about the background to TV news should be particularly informed and in-depth.

Deadline, which started last Monday and will run for another five weeks, takes a behind the scenes look at *Calendar*, Yorkshire Television's nightly 6 o'clock news programme. The series has been made by an independent — Real Life Productions — run by former *Calendar*' reporter Ruth Pitt. She has lived for the past ten years with Ali Rashid, who is the editor of, er, *Calendar*.

SELF-STYLED media consultant and ex-Labour MP John Grant wrote a recent article in *Broadcast* magazine attacking the new station Talk Radio.

"I have been bored rather than horrified," he sneered, adding: "Not much shock but plenty of gormless junk."

What Mr Grant failed to mention was that he himself had approached the station only a few months before. He had put forward a format for a weekly contest with three panellists and a chairman called *I Can Do It Better*. The enterprising Mr Grant had said: "I would want to stake my own claim for a crack at chairman."

Unfortunately the director of programmes at Talk Radio, Jeremy Scott, never gave Mr Grant the chance and he gave the programme idea the thumbs down. This unequivocal rejection obviously didn't colour Grant's critique, however, which was entirely unbiased.

PRESENTER Clive James got a ticking off recently from the BBC's animal police over a scene in *A Postcard From...* in which he met warring loggers and environmentalists in Oregon.

The green campaigners want to preserve the habitat of the Northern Spotted Owl, and to secure footage of this wondrous creature at work — which includes hunting cute little furry animals and killing them in cold blood — the producers enlisted some Oregon rangers. They helped Clive tempt the owls... by using white mice as live bait.

This had the Beeb's higher echelons running to their Beatrix Potter books. They couldn't bear the sight of a wriggling mouse being plucked from Clive's pudgy palm, and frostily pointed out to the producers that such things contravened the 1937 Broadcasting Act and its animal cruelty rules. The scene in question had to go.

I-SKY O·B·N

I'm a great admirer of Sky News. It's brilliant...

... Rupert Murdoch has always been a genius at giving people what they want.

MICHAEL WINNER
News of the World

CONTRIBUTOR: Stephen Parry

HOW THEY ARE RELATED

RUTH ARNOLD, the editor of *Wine* magazine, is to be elevated to the giddy status of consultant editor. She will be working at the mag for three days a week. On the other two days she will be attending to her new job as public relations adviser to the Penfolds Wine Group.

This is a happy coincidence. For in the 1994 International Wine Challenge — organised by *Wine* magazine — the "Red Wine Trophy" was awarded to Penfolds Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon, while Penfolds Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon was named "Red Wine of the Year". Presumably, however, Arnold sees no conflict of interest in her two roles.

HACKWATCH SPECIAL

PET PEOPLE with KEVIN HORKIN

KEVIN HORKIN is the millionaire owner of a chain of successful optician's shops in the north-west of England. He also has an unusual and lucrative sideline — hiring out pet animals to television programmes, particularly *Coronation Street*.

Remember Hilda Ogden's cat? Mavis Wilton's budgie? Jack Duckworth's pigeons? They all came from Horkin's menage, which he keeps at his farm in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire.

But Kevin wanted more. Eighteen months ago he contacted John Sutton, who runs the J'Ace "personal management" service, and announced that he yearned to be famous.

His wish was granted. Since then, with Sutton's help, Horkin has acquired a weekly "Pet People" column in the *Sunday People* as well as a column in *Our Dogs* magazine. He runs a highly profitable "Petline" recorded advice service on 0891 telephone numbers, which are plugged every week on his page in the *People*. He has published a book, *Pets and Personalities on Coronation Street*. And now he has been commissioned to make a video about dogs.

Is he grateful? Apparently not. A fortnight ago, he sacked Sutton as his manager. Horkin may come to regret this falling-out. For Sutton is now willing to reveal the methods by which his former client's "success" has been achieved.

One of his allegations is that Horkin's book, and his columns in the *People* and *Our Dogs*, were in fact largely penned by Sutton himself. With *Pets and Personalities on Coronation Street*, for instance, Horkin proposed that Sutton should write the text in return for a 50 percent share of the advance and royalties. Once Sutton had started work, however, Horkin suddenly decided that all the proceeds would be going to charity — the charity in question being Pet Role, an obscure outfit created and administered by Horkin himself. Sutton was not pleased: pointing out that he couldn't afford to write the book for nothing, he downed tools. Horkin then agreed to pay him after all — on condition Sutton assign the copyright to Horkin, thus allowing him to pass as the sole author. Sutton duly signed and was paid £1,500.

The *People* column, which began in January this year, consists of two sections: an interview with a celebrity about his or her pets, and answers to readers' pet-related questions. Sutton claims he not only wrote the celebrity features but also "invented" many of them — most ludicrously, a bogus interview with Madonna, in which she revealed herself as a passionate dog-lover.

Sutton also composed the replies to readers' letters, in consultation with his local vet. ("My two-year-old Staffordshire bull terrier bitch was late coming into season... Why is this and what can we do?"). He also says he wrote the scripts which Horkin reads out on his recorded "Petline" for which Horkin pockets 50 percent of all the call fees.

Sutton was supposed to get some of this loot, as well as a regular payment for writing his columns in the *People* and *Our Dogs*. Two weeks ago he asked Horkin when he could expect to see some of the money he was owed. Horkin's reaction was to fire him — which is why Sutton is now hell-bent on revenge.

Sutton's most damaging allegation concerns Horkin's relations with the cast of *Coronation Street*. Over the years, Horkin has become friendly with several of the show's stars, who are therefore only too happy to cooperate with him by providing fascinating titbits about their own pets for his book and his columns. Unbeknown to them, however, Horkin has been going behind their backs and secretly flogging rather more lurid tabloid stories about them — or so Sutton claims.

Last summer, for instance, the actress Lynne Perrie was working on her memoirs, which had been bought by the *Sun*. Chatting with her "friend" Horkin, she mentioned some incidents from her love-life which she intended to write about, including a fling with Freddie Starr. Shortly afterwards, the *People* ran a news item about the Perrie-Starr liaison.

Horkin flatly denies that he sold the story. However, the *Eye* has obtained a contract sent to Horkin by the *People* in August 1994 — signed by the paper's news editor, Tom Petrie — promising to pay £10,000 for the exclusive rights to a story about "Lynne Perrie and her book including full details of her affairs with Freddie Starr and Johnny Briggs".

When challenged about this last week, Horkin said it was merely an unsolicited offer from the *People* and he had not taken it up. But why would a national newspaper send such a specific contract to someone unless it had reason to suppose that he would indeed dish the dirt on Lynne Perrie's affairs? (Perrie herself declined to comment. "I know nothing about it," she told the *Eye*. "There are so many people who've sold stories about me that I'm getting numb now.")

Earlier this year, Horkin did it again. Hearing from one of his "chums" on *Coronation Street* that the actor Bill Waddington (aka Percy Sugden) was about to get married, he asked Sutton to flog the story to the *Sun*, which duly paid £5,000 for the tip. Horkin assured us last week that this was nothing to do with him. But the *Eye* has an invoice from Horkin to Sutton, dated 3 March 1995, in which he requested his £4,500 share of the fee (the remaining £500 being Sutton's commission), which suggests that his protestations of innocence are slightly disingenuous.

There may well be further trouble ahead, since Sutton has already faxed some of these apparently incriminating documents to several of the stars of *Coronation Street*. Contacted at Crufts last week, where he was filming his new video, Horkin told the *Eye* that Sutton was "a very desperate, sad, pathetic individual". When we asked Sutton what he thought of Horkin, his verdict was equally complimentary: "He's a talentless shitbag."

ART NEWS

THE European Bank of Reconstruction and Development is engaged in further "reconstruction" of its London HQ — much to the alarm of art-lovers.

Outside the EBRD's office in the Broadgate Centre, next to Liverpool Street station, is an eye-catching bronze statue known as the Broadgate Venus — a huge, reclining nude by the Colombian sculptor Fernando Botero. "She is," says the official guidebook to art at the Broadgate centre, "captivating, fascinating, yet curiously secretive."

Not quite secretive enough, however. Prudish executives at the bank have now demanded that the statue be turned the other way round, so they no longer have to look out at the Venus's naked bottom. It has apparently not occurred to them that, if their request is granted, they will instead face her naked breasts.

Another important art-work has already suffered an even more ignominious fate. Until recently the window above the bank's front door was embellished with a 20-ft picture called "Globe and Umbrella" by the leading British artist Michael Craig-Martin — "a focal point in the facade", as the guidebook notes. Now it has mysteriously disappeared: the window is completely blank.

"It was a transfer stuck on the existing window," a bank spokeswoman told the *Eye*. "We sub-let that floor to the Tokai bank, who requested that we remove it, which we did."

This is slightly surprising. Michael Craig-Martin is arguably the most influential figure in the British art world; his work sells for tens of thousands of pounds. So what did the EBRD do with "Globe and Umbrella"? Pass it on to a gallery? Sell it at auction? Er, no. "Our engineers just peeled it off," the spokeswoman admitted cheerfully. "There was no value to keeping it, so it was disposed of." Thrown away, in other words.

DOING THE ROUNDS

LONDON'S Maudsley hospital is to close its much needed mental health unit devoted to the treatment of health professionals.

Whitley One ward has been a safe haven for doctors and nurses needing in-patient psychiatric treatment over the last two years, but has been forced to close because future funding cannot be guaranteed. No one, it seems, is willing to purchase care for the carers.

● ALL IS not well at **Wirral's Arrow Park hospital**. Ward sisters, staff nurses and state enrolled nurses (SENs) have been ordered to reapply for fewer jobs with new descriptions and less money. Many of the SENs are vastly experienced but have been offered new roles they describe as "worthless".

Nurses are expected to attend compulsory educational courses in their own time and with their own money because the trust refuses to pay. A new post of health care assistant has been created to cover ward clerking, cleaning and basic nursing duties for the princely sum of £6,000 a year. As one nurse of 30 years' service put it: "A lot of good people have left the hospital. Some have even had breakdowns. I have never known staff morale be so low or stress levels so high."

● DR KENNEDY, **York health trust's** £86,000 supremo, has spent £3.5 million on a computer system that has yet to reach fruition. He's now required to save £5.2 million and axe 382 jobs, including that of director of nursing Helen Coyne.

A threefold increase in student nurse rents has been forced through, but attempts to attract private income have had less success. His Tory chairman, Sir Richard Storey, is so enamoured with York's service he took himself off to a private clinic in **Harrow** for treatment, justifying the decision because "the two hospitals aren't in direct competition". No such excuse for Lady Storey, who prefers the comforts of the nearby **Purey Crust Nuffield hospital** to her husband's trust.

● THE **Cardiff Royal** group of hospitals is having trouble matching up to the exacting standards of the patient's charter. From 1 April all hips, knees and cataracts have to be done within two years of the date of referral. At least one surgeon has a waiting list for knees of just 253 weeks — or four and a half years.

● **WEST Midlands regional health authority** has set up a "market intelligence unit" to spy on local hospitals. So far it has spotted that "more than one" patient has had to spend more than eight hours on a trolley while awaiting admission to **City hospital trust, Dudley group of hospitals trust, South Birmingham acute unit** and **Royal Wolverhampton trust**. Meanwhile **Solihull hospital**, which opened last July, has already clocked up an impressive £7.8 million deficit: £2.4 million is accounted for by "additional running costs not anticipated in the hospital's original spending plan" and the rest is down to lack of custom. The hospital may have to merge with Birmingham's **Heartlands trust**, where a junior doctor recently arrived at a cardiac arrest to find the defibrillator didn't work.

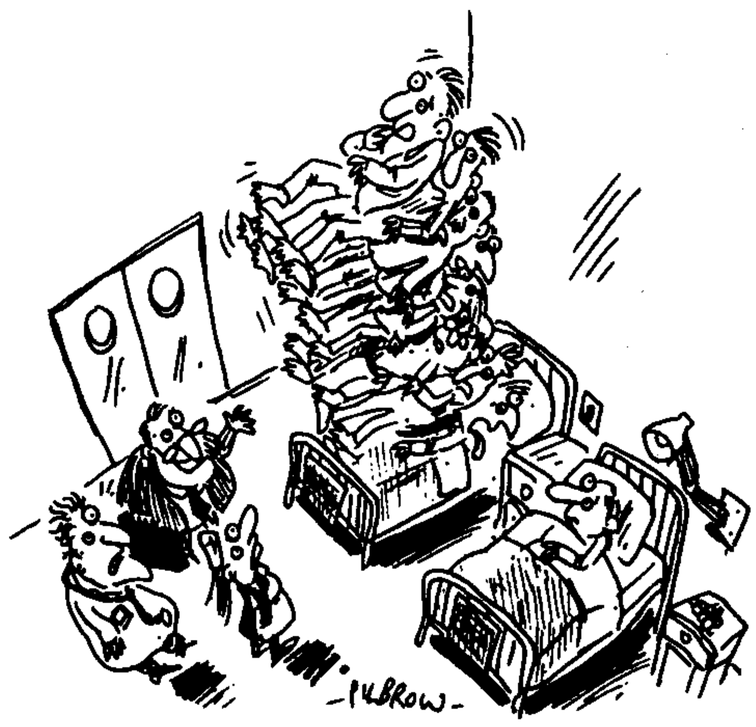
● **MANCHESTER'S** regional cancer centre, **Christie hospital**, is facing an £800,000 "shortfall" in its drugs budget. Voluntary redundancies have been called for to add to the 23 cytology staff and three medical physics staff who were sacked last year. And GPs in **Middlesex** have been sending emergency admissions referrals into **Ashford hospital trust** by fax to avoid having to justify their decisions by phone to "rude, arrogant and patronising" junior medical staff.

● **NOTTINGHAM health trust** has farmed out £300,000 of varicose vein and hernia business to local private hospitals where the same doctors who work for the trust will carry out the surgery. Meanwhile, employees of **Northern regional health authority** have received private healthcare applications in their wage slips.

● CASH-strapped **Cornwall healthcare trust** is so behind with its payments for catering services that suppliers have refused further credit. As a result, patients at **St Lawrence's psychiatric hospital** have been so short of food nurses have had to nip to the local Spar at lunchtime to buy provisions.

● **ADMINISTRATIVE endeavour now accounts for 11.6 percent or £1.7 billion of the NHS annual budget.**

M.D.



"Beats me why we never thought of stacking them before"

FOCUS ON BARTS

THE Royal Hospitals Trust proposed in 1994 that St Bartholomew's hospital should be combined with the Royal London hospital and the London Chest hospital on a single site at Whitechapel and Mile End.

East London and the City health authority (ELCHA), which is in charge of purchasing health services for the people of east London and the City, considered the trust's proposals and made it clear it favoured the single site option too. A three-month public consultation period followed which was to end on 13 March when the ELCHA would vote on the way forward.

The Barts medical council meanwhile believed that the Royal Hospital Trust's method of choosing the single site option was faulty and not carried out according to the department of health's own guidelines. The council decided to commission a team from York University to research the options for Barts independently. The team weighed up the non-financial benefits according to DoH guidelines and undertook a survey. The results concluded that the case made for the single site option was unconvincing.

One day before Barts medical council went public with its results, the trust management hit back with a press release of their own which claimed that the York team actually *agreed* with the trust's proposals to shut Barts. According to the trust bosses, the new report stated that the single site was the best option for clinical and financial reasons. This was, er, blatantly untrue.

ELCHA met on 13 March to discuss the consultation. Its briefing papers for the meeting were drawn up by a Mr Stopes-Roe, a civil servant who had also drawn up the Tomlinson report which recommended Barts closure. These briefing papers contained substantial errors; data from the York report was summarised, taken out of context and used to support the trust's case.

The trust's final outrageous sleight of hand was in its reading of the public survey responses. If respondents did not use the appropriate terminology in the consultation survey their opinion on Barts future was classified as "no preference stated". So anyone who simply said "Don't close Barts" or "Keep Barts open" was classified as "no preference stated".

Of 1,244 responses, 1,118 (90 percent) were classified as no preference stated. In fact, 1,091 (88 percent) of the respondents had said don't close Barts.

The East London and City health authority considered the Royal Hospitals Trust proposals and voted to support them, despite the overwhelming opposition of the general public. The final decision lies in the safe hands of the secretary of state for health, Mrs Virginia Bottomley.

SIGNAL FAILURES

ONE businessman who has stopped organising special trains because Railtrack's extortionate access charges make it too expensive has calculated that if equivalent charges applied to road transport, coach operators would have to pay road duty of £1,095,000 a year for each coach.

Indeed, such is the distortion of the conditions applying to rail and road that the road tax for 10 coaches for a *whole year* is about the same as the track access charge for a single 500-seater train for *one day*.

Railfreight Distribution, a division of BR, is hoping to attract custom with a glossy map showing distances between various European cities. The map shows no railways — just the trunk roads. The road system, of course, is very familiar to RfD, which until recently was one of Britain's largest road hauliers. In 1991 it was responsible for axing the Speedlink rail service for small volumes of freight — business which other BR freight managers are now trying to win back from the roads.

● REGIONAL Railways South Wales and West shadow franchise goes to great lengths to stop home counties folk boarding its near-empty services from Cardiff to London Waterloo. Even though the trains typically end their journeys with just four or five passengers on board, the guard opens only one train door to let people off at Basingstoke and Woking — so he can ensure nobody gets on. South Wales and West wouldn't get a share of the ticket revenue from the local train operator for carrying people into London from those places, so rather than give an improved service to rail passengers, it leaves them in the cold.

"Mrs Bottomley can't make it... but here are the answers to any question you might ask!"

DOWN ON THE FARM

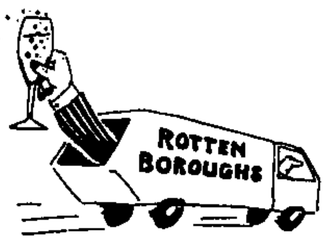
LOCAL councils, who currently carry out meat inspection in British slaughterhouses, whose numbers are ever diminishing, are not happy that the meat hygiene service (MHS), is set to take over their job on 1 April.

News is leaking out of the extraordinary efforts the Ministry of Agriculture clone MHS is making to reduce its operational staff costs. Rather than employ experienced UK personnel, it has imported a clutch of cheap foreign vets, the latest being a bunch of 22 Spaniards.

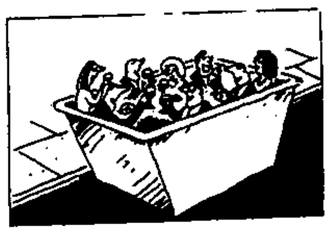
Since none of the Spaniards speaks English, they are being accompanied to Bristol by a nun who will translate for them while they sit through the two-week Maffia meat inspection course. Language skills apart, this two-week course will qualify them to tell our slaughterhouse owners how to run their businesses.

Quite how the nun will provide translation services when the vets are dispersed across the country has not been explained. But given the reaction to the recent exploits of Spanish fishermen in near-Canadian waters, the only words our new Spanish meat inspectors will have to translate are "fuck off". Small wonder that Tony Blair, John Prescott and the entire Labour agricultural team led by Dr Gavin Strang have signed an early day motion calling for the regulations empowering the MHS to be annulled. It is a little ironic that the Labour party should be opposing regulations unleashing a monstrous new bureaucracy and launched by Willie "free market" Waldegrave's ministry. His ministry drew up more than 108 regulations last year — compared with just 66 in 1978 — and is set for a new record this year.

'New Muckspreader'



THE Rotten Borough Advertiser



TENANTS' LAAGER

MORE trouble in gerrymandering Westminster where district auditor John Magill has launched an inquiry into the council's treatment of tenants on the Walterton and Elgin estate in the Labour-supporting north of the borough.

When Dame Shirley Porter was still council leader, Walterton residents tried to block town hall attempts to sell off their homes to developers by applying to become their own landlords. The council had neglected Walterton for years hoping that in desperation its tenants would leave. It also dumped "difficult" tenants on the estate (read: Labour types) from surrounding marginal seats.

However, the lengths to which the Tory council went to "dissuade" tenants from becoming their own landlords (under the Tory government's "tenants' choice" legislation!) has only recently come to light.

Officers targeted tenants' leader Jonathan Rosenberg and (unsuccessfully) tried to find valid reasons to evict him. Then, on the day the tenants were scheduled to make their presentation to the Housing Corporation, the council cleverly forced the resignation of the tenants' voluntary financial adviser. (It told the latter's bosses, a firm which occasionally did contract work for the council, that it might not be favoured when it came to handing out council contracts in the future should its man continue to help the Walterton tenants.)

Naturally there was a big row over the council's behaviour, and Westminster realised it could no longer ignore objectors so they called in former Cambridgeshire chief executive John Barratt to investigate. Embarrassingly, Barratt's report notes that "senior officers assisted the attempted but unsuccessful political lobbying and influencing of government and the Housing Corporation and the attempted de-railing of the bid... senior officers became involved in the hypocrisy of the council's position, in supporting residents' 'choice' while actually being hostile to the bid." Barrett has also questioned the council's decision to move 60 homeless families into two asbestos-ridden tower blocks just before the 1990 elections, as detailed recently in the *Eye*.

The district auditor's forthcoming investigation is the twentieth thus far in Westminster.

BED AND BOARD CHAIRMAN

ALLEGED Ugandan discussions between Tory councillor Richard Buckley and "a senior Bent female officer" are less straightforward than reported in the last issue.

Buckley, who hopes to become Bent North's next MP, was the only Tory to miss the recent council meeting when Labour temporarily gained control. When opponents then spread rumours that he had had an extra-marital affair, acting chief executive Peter Raine went to the unusual length of warning councillors not to repeat the allegations. But that was because the rumour had nailed the wrong woman council officer!

Buckley's liaison was with Bent advertising agency director Ruth Jackson, who until recently was in charge of the council's so-called Ad Shop. Before she retired, Jackson had been on eight months' paid sick leave and the business lost nearly half a million pounds — astonishing for an authority which prides itself on tight financial management.

So what was Bent's Business Board, which was in charge of the failing Ad Shop, doing to stem the losses? Perhaps the council should ask the board chairman... Richard Buckley.

LIBERALS ON THIN ICE

THE saga of the ice-rink in Richmond, west London, continues. Although local gallery owner Richard Meacock has failed to take the Liberal-run council to the European court of human rights over its role in the affair, he is now going to the high court.

He wants the court to stop luxury flats being built on the site of the demolished rink because planning permission ran out last October. Not everyone appreciates his efforts. A bullet was recently put through the window of his Richmond gallery; but he claims he won't be "scared off by this or by the windows of my house in Windsor being smashed on three occasions".

Meanwhile Liberal-run Richmond claims it has acted honourably throughout the affair, which began when the rink's owners, London and Edinburgh Trust (LET), sought permission to demolish the rink and build luxury houses. In return the council expected LET to contribute £22.5 million worth of leisure facilities for Richmond, including new ice-skating.

However, according to confidential papers obtained by the *Eye*, ruling Liberal councillors, worried that LET might successfully appeal to the department of the environment to reduce its compensation, renegotiated the deal at a private meeting in September 1989. They agreed they would "walk away" from the £22.5 million deal that November and outlined how the council would give permission for LET's luxury houses at a special planning committee to be held a month later. They added that there should be a cash compensation payment "for the enhancement of leisure and recreation facilities... to be maximised by negotiation". The fact that planning permission can only be decided by the full council and not "agreed" by one political party in private, seems not to have concerned the Liberal, er, *Democrats*.

Meacock and opposition councillors claim the September 1989 meeting was illegal since no member of any other party was present. After the meeting council chief executive Richard Harbord wrote to LET outlining the plans and quoting a compensation figure of £2.5 million — not quite the £22.5 million first mooted but helpful for setting an attractive pre-election poll tax.

RED FACE OF THE WEEK

PETER EVANS, the deputy leader of Lambeth Tories who was arrested in October for allegedly defrauding the Nationwide building society of £49,000, has been joined in the dock by fellow Tory councillor Nicholas McKay. McKay was recently charged with conspiring with Evans to claim housing benefit fraudulently — from Lambeth. Both have been vociferous critics of fraud and corruption in Lambeth — and both will be back in court again together next month!

IN BRIEF

WAKEFIELD: The council was justified, an industrial tribunal says, in sacking the woman accused of circulating a poem and letter about alleged legovers in the authority (*Eye* 866). However, Mary Sanderson has an unblemished 20-year employment record, she denies writing the material and has vowed to appeal. Sadly, the council's barrister stopped "scurrilous" titbits being read out, so the *Eye* offers the usual tenner...

LIVERPOOL: Labour members in Granby are in difficulty after the deselection of sitting councillor and deputy mayor Petrona Lashley. The chosen replacement from the local black community, Carlton Benjamin, faces an accusation of common assault from his girlfriend, and regional Labour bosses advised him to withdraw his candidature. Meanwhile Harry Rimmer, council leader, has moved to Knotty Ash and had an operation on his nether regions. Let out of *hossie* to preside over the budget meeting, Rimmer had to sit on a cushion. But he didn't cushion the blow for voters: they still face the highest council tax in the country.

LINCOLNSHIRE: Tories in the county acted illegally, says the district auditor, by publishing a pre-election newspaper that championed the (Tory) council's four-year record and hence tried to boost party political fortunes. The ruling may set an interesting precedent: almost every council produces trashy free mags full of municipal brown-nosing at election time. If they were restrained from supporting the ruling regime the mags would have to be scrapped and ratepayers would save millions. (The Tories later lost Lincolnshire, as it happens.)

SOUTHWARK: Embattled Liberal Democrats are investigating the colourful past of one of their own: Robert Bayne, councillor for Chaucer Ward and no stranger to the DHSS fraud squad or the inside of a prison cell. Investigations into his record have been hampered by his reluctance to give his national insurance number or date of birth. When the final picture is gathered, Mr Bayne could be disqualified from holding office.

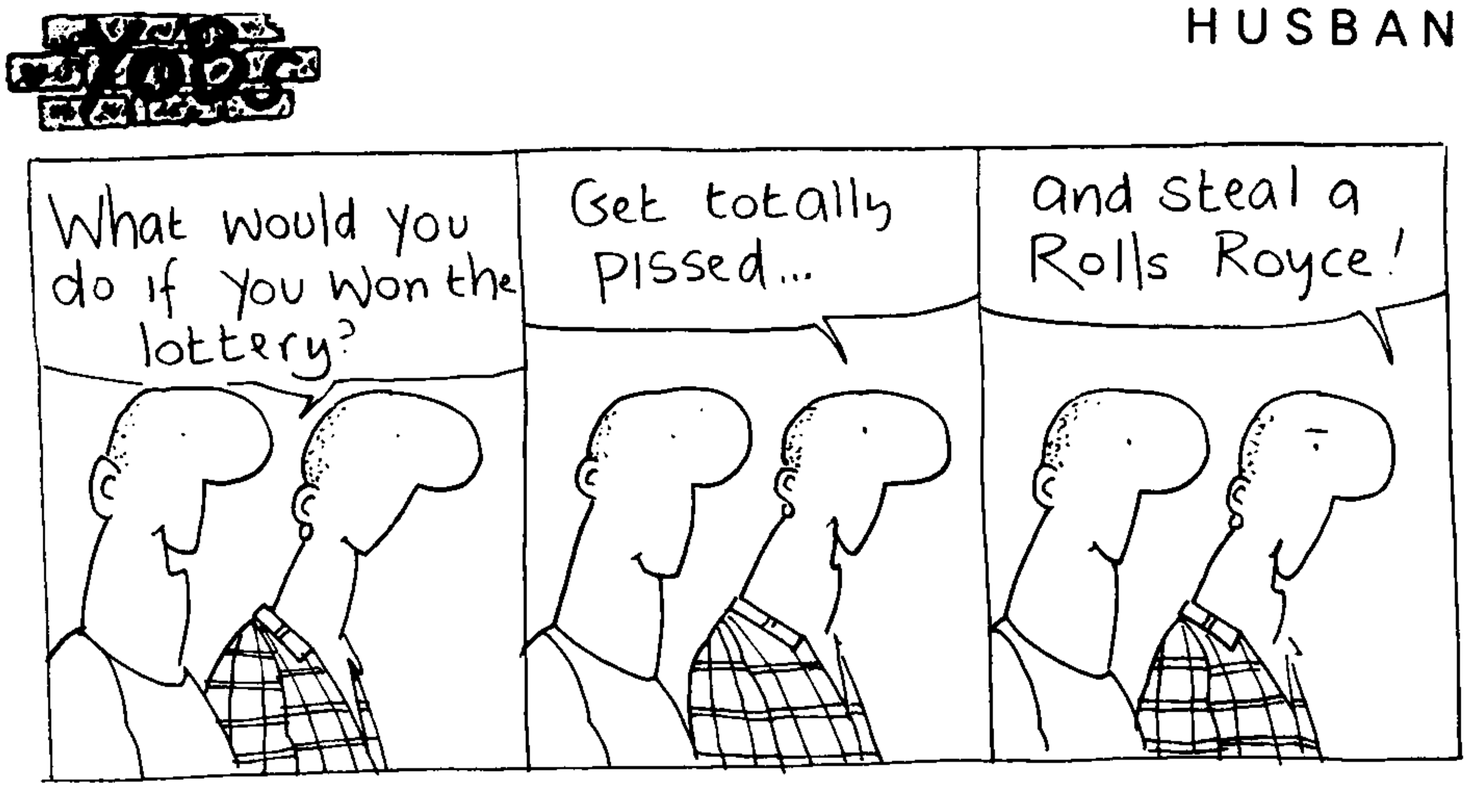
CHILD ABUSE

LAST issue, the *Eye* reported the alarming coincidence of the social worker who had questioned the children in both the Ayrshire and Orkney child abuse cases. In both instances children were removed from their parents under the shadow of child abuse.

The Ayrshire children have recently been returned to their families after a judge ruled that the questioning which had led to their removal was "excessive" and "defective".

Liz McLean, the social worker in question, is now being pursued by Lothian Housing Association for debts which run into thousands of pounds. She appears to have left owing the association in Edinburgh hundreds of pounds and owing a Fife plumber more than £7,000.

The two cases share another character too: Dr Ann Sutton, the paediatrician who mistakenly diagnosed abuse in the Ayrshire cases, also made the Orkney examinations.



HUSBAND

Letters

Exclamation Mark

Sir,

Thank you for the early promotion of the Mark Thatcher book. As usual you did not get it quite right.

The MAIL ON SUNDAY *was not the highest bidder, simply the best. Mr J. Holborow, its editor, showed exquisite judgement about the book and has been privy to information that others have not.*

As to Owen John Oyston. I am not a member of a "War Council" nor have I been asked to be one. You should have pressed your informant more closely on this as he **is** *part of the Oyston War Cabinet.*

Thank you also for the reference to Mellor/De Sancha. Again not exactly right but never mind. Incidentally, has anyone ever asked Mellor if he enjoyed his fling with De Sancha? I have and know the answer but I'm not telling.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL HALLORAN.

Lay reader writes

Sir,

I have just read the comments about Bishop Westwood in Church Times (EYE *867). As a lay reader in Peterborough diocese, and a press professional, I smell a rat somewhere... and it ain't the bishop...*

OK, so he's not averse to a bit of publicity — like a few thousand others one could mention. But does he really insist on being known as "Dr" Westwood? Strange — I've been in the diocese even longer than the Bish, and never noticed it. And most of us call him "Wee Willie" behind his back in our more disrespectful moments; in all my conversations with both clergy and laity, I've never once heard him referred to as "Little Billy Bullshit".

Why do I have this feeling that your embittered informant may not live a million miles away from the parish of Cogenhoe? Perhaps we should be told. And, like your informant, please don't publish my name and address — Wee Willie has his faults like most of us, and he's due to renew my licence in May! But, as one of his readers, I feel I owe the man some loyalty — unlike, it seems, one or two of the ordained crazies that he has to put up with.

Yours,
A. READER.

Making waves

Sir,

Eye Gullible: Writing, as you so rightly do, in EYE *867 of "gullible British journalists" you prompt me to ask why* EYE *is the only organ in the whole world to grind on about something called "wavepower". In almost every issue, including* EYE *867.*

Wavepower does not exist. It does not contribute even picowatts to the public power supply anywhere in the world; never has, and never will.

It exists only in the fevered imagination of a hack who has spent too long in the sun, dabbling toes in the waves, who keeps on plugging it in your organ.

Yours affectionately,
DAVID FISHLOCK,
Jordans, Bucks.

Up in arms

Sir,

Your somewhat hysterical piece regarding the meeting to address the issue of sanctions against Iraq in the grand committee room of the House of Commons (EYE *866) contains both inaccuracies and discourtesies.*

There were no blood-curdling rallying calls to sell arms to Saddam Hussein. There were some pretty chilling descriptions of the devastation which sanctions against Iraq have caused. For example: the United Nation's Children's Fund representative in Baghdad has said that 9,000 children a month above that which would be expected have died as a direct result of this blockade.

Modern hospitals built with petro-dollars and entirely reliant on western pharmaceuticals, equipment and servicing, have been reduced to little more than 19th century field hospitals. The calorific intake of the average Iraqi, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, is now lower than many of the most famine-stricken areas of Africa.

The "Iraqi thugs" you refer to in the audience included many eminent men and women with British nationality, who had settled here believing in Britain's decency and democracy, but are now appalled at the plight their friends and relations in Iraq find themselves in. They have contributed much to this country financially and as physicians, surgeons, lawyers, academics and in many areas of business.

Yours faithfully,
FELICITY ARBUTHNOT,
London E9.

Lookalike

Grayson

Blair

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the strange resemblance between the late Larry "Shoot that door" Grayson and the punctual Tory "Shoot Clause Four" Blair? I think we should be told.

Yours,
JULIE GURLEY,
Abbotside Common, N. Yorks.

Down in the dumps

Sir,

The GUARDIAN*'s Ian Mayes has got his nerve. I was the paper's regional theatre critic for Cambridge and East Anglia for 24 years (1969-93). Mayes wrote me a charming letter at the end of that time to say that Billington would have to work harder as they could no longer afford the stable of regional critics his predecessors had built up over the years. "It may be some consolation," he added smarmily, "that similar letters are being sent out to several of our other regular critics." If that's not dumping, I'll take vanilla.*

Regards,
MICHAEL GROSVENOR MYER,
Haddenham, Cambridge.

"Good day. Could I interest you in our PEPs scheme?"

LUVVIES

"Branagh changed my career at the age of 55," Briers admits gratefully.

"It was as if an angel had arrived at my side, touched my shoulder and said, 'You're not dead yet old man'."

RICHARD BRIERS
Dublin Evening Herald

Submitted by Paul Lenehan.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Vested interest

Sir,

I wonder if you can assist me? I am currently writing a thesis entitled "The Sexual Attraction of Vests". My main point is that, contrary to popular opinion, the humble vest is found by many women to be sexually attractive. Furthermore, I believe that this is found to be the case among many young Asian women (or "babes" as I believe they are known) who find the older man particularly attractive in a vest.

I understand that you recently published a photograph which supports my thesis but I have been unable to get a copy. Could you possibly reprint it? I would be most grateful.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN NEVILLE,
Warley, West Midlands.

Sunstroke of genius

Sir,

Your "own correspondent" in Gaza seems to have spent a bit too much time sunning himself on Gaza's famous beaches, resulting in a touch of heatstroke which has warped his knowledge of reality. For example, Goldstein killed 29 Muslims, not your fanciful "over 50". While this appalling act was condemned by the entire population of Israel, save about 300 fanatics, polls show over 50 percent of Palestinians supporting terror attacks on Jews. These attacks certainly have killed more than 50.

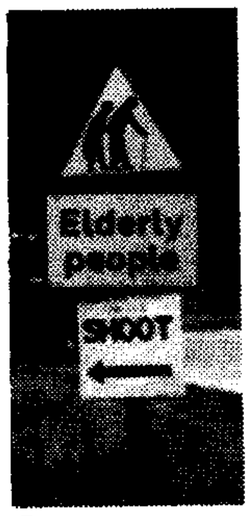
The dire economic situation in Gaza is entirely due to Arafat's insistence on the World Bank sending its aid as a personal cheque addressed to the "President" himself. He refuses to permit even the most rudimentary accountability.

The assertion that most settlers are Brooklyn-born is a blatant lie. Most settlers are Israeli born and have never been to Brooklyn.

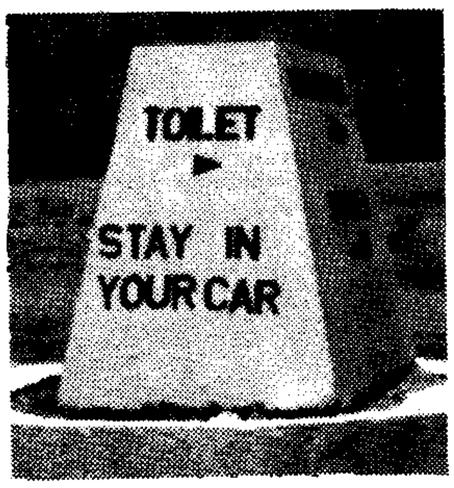
Your correspondent is certainly no theologian. The Torah says nothing about Armageddon on the Temple Mount between Jews and Muslims. It says nothing even remotely connected to that idea —which is hardly surprising since the Jews were in charge of the Temple Mount, with the Torah already written, 1,700 years before Mohammed was even born.

Yours in possession of the facts,
JONATHAN BALCOMBE,
Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

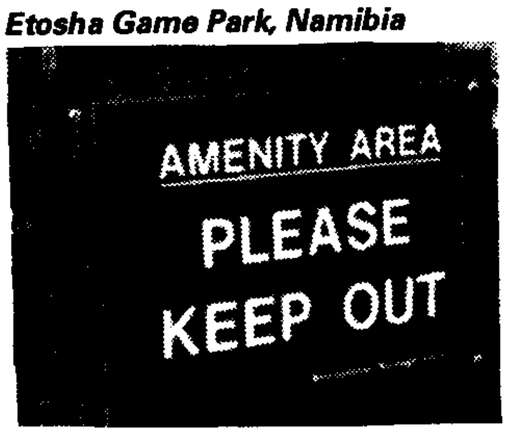
I-SPY



Dunoon



Etosha Game Park, Namibia



Wallasey Village

Submitted by Mrs M. Sandercock, Harriet Fowler, Frances Kennah. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Local hero

Sir,

I'm afraid you were misinformed about Richmond ice rink and Richmond council (Rotten Borough Advertiser, 866). London and Edinburgh Trust bought the ice rink from a private company, not from Richmond council or from "the Liberals". The £2.5 million LET gave the council in 1989 was for breach of contract when they did not modernise Richmond baths (where they planned to build a new ice rink but didn't).

"Locals" are not taking the council to the European court. The court has refused to accept a case from one local obsessive. He has also been completely unsuccessful with the high court and the local ombudsman.

Yours,
DAVID WILLIAMS,
Leader of the Council, Richmond-Upon-Thames.

Sir,

Is there so little real sleaze about these days that PRIVATE EYE *is forced to recycle old (and not very good) stories?*

The snippet on 24 February which reports that I "have been hired by London & Edinburgh Trust" to work on its Richmond ice rink scheme is well over five years out of date.

Even PRIVATE EYE *should have known that, because it carried an almost identical exclusive in February 1990, to the effect that I was "retained at a handsome fee by London & Edinburgh Trust" to work on the self-same project. I ceased to work on the project so many years ago that not even I can remember when.*

It's not often that a publication scoops itself by five years, so hats off to the EYE *and its informers.*

But then, as I say, not much else is happening in Westminster these days.

Yours faithfully,
PETER BRADLEY,
Deputy Leader of the Opposition, City of Westminster.

Taken for granted

Sir,

As an avid reader of PRIVATE EYE *I was naturally gratified to find my name in your issue of 24 February. Just a few minor points were wrong, however:*

1 I am not on the planning committee, nor was I when permission for my current dwelling was granted;

2 there are many houses in Divinity Road that have had planning permission for extensions;

3 the owner of the house is no longer a city councillor;

4 the house would have been let to a homeless family, but the lettings agency turned it down.

So no collusion, no cover-up — and no story.

Yours famously,
CLLR RHONDA RIACHI,
Oxford.

PS: Do I get an apology, or do I have to hire an overpaid lawyer to get one?

Productive organ

Sir,

May I defend my organ in your organ? You say in Street of Shame (867) that the YORKSHIRE POST *made no mention of former judge James Pickles' racist outburst at our own literary luncheon. This is not true. I wrote a piece, quite separate from the usual report of the lunch itself, which appeared as part of the lead item on page three of the paper in its issue of 17 February.*

Yours fraternally,
MICHAEL BROWN,
Religious Affairs Correspondent, YORKSHIRE POST.

Please address letters for publication to Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG or e-mail to strobes@cix.compulink.co.uk (marked "For Publication"). And the Eye's WWW page is now available: http://www.intervid.co.uk/intervid/eye/gateway.html

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Football today, it's like a game of chess. It's all about money."
NEWCASTLE UNITED FAN, Radio 5 Live
(R. Webb)

"They are reaping the whirlwind they have sown."
PRISON OFFICE SPOKESMAN, Radio 4
(Elizabeth Wells)

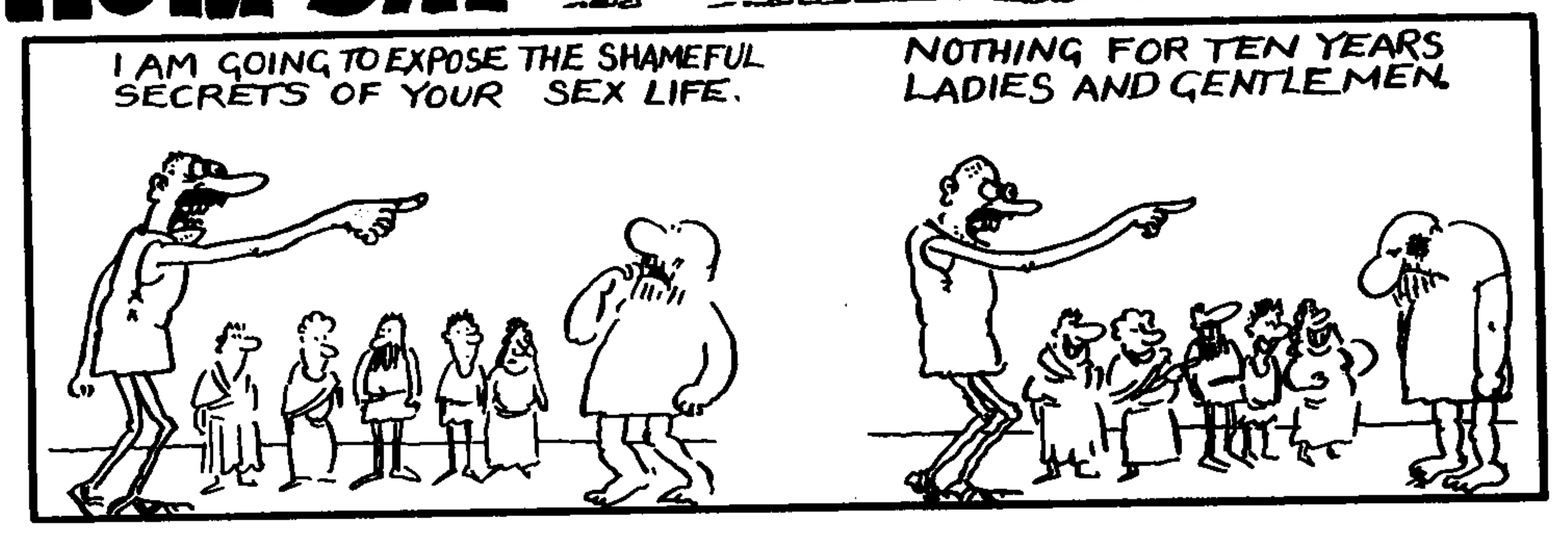
"Gary [Cole] always weighed up his options, especially when he had no choice."
KEVIN KEEGAN, Radio 5
(R. Chambers)

"... and 30 years of longevity takes time to mature."
CLIFF RICHARD, Capital Gold
(Colin Brown)

John Inverdale: *What do you think the score will be?*
Caller: *Nil-all draw.*
John Inverdale: *So who'll score for Everton then?*
Radio Five Live
(Mark van der Walt)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



Postcard from **Lagos**

from Our Own Correspondent

THE promise from head of state General Sani Abacha to "disengage" our country from military rule "as soon as possible" has suffered several serious setbacks recently due to the actions of, er, one General Sani Abacha.

It is widely believed that following the annullment (by our previous military ruler, General Babangida) of the infamous June 12 election — which was won fair and square by civilian MKO Abiola — the country was rescued from serious civil unrest by the bringing together, by Abacha and the military, of key political figures from a variety of backgrounds. We were led to believe that these figures would help oversee the movement from military to civilian democratic rule, thus ridding Nigeria of the military once and for all.

Imagine our surprise when, last month, General Abacha dissolved the federal executive council, which his chief of staff had stated was due to allow the cabinet members to return to their own political power bases and prepare for the "forthcoming elections". At least all Nigerians can now see that the normally morose general has a sense of humour. Nobody was surprised when, once dismissed, several former ministers came under intense attacks from the press, making their return to political office unlikely at any future date.

Although some ministers will almost certainly be reappointed, those who do return will be Abacha's lackeys. New ministers will also be drawn from Abacha's own military constituency, rewarding high-ranking officers for their continued support. Daily we see our country drawn further into a military dictatorship, which, although not on the scale of some African nations in terms of bloodshed and repression, places the prospect of a return to democratic rule far in the distance.

At times like this we look to the guidance of our former colonial masters, the British. It is a shame so much of their time here seems to be spent wondering what the size their diplomatic mission to Abuja should be.

Although they have one of the largest missions in the world in Lagos, they have been planning for more than five years to move a large part of it to Abuja. The plan seems to have gone very wrong. Given constant reminders by the British high commission that we should have in place a fully democratic, representative government, we are all amazed that British taxpayers have failed to ask why the British have spent, in Abuja alone, more than £7 million to build two large offices (three kilometres apart), a diplomatic village (complete with tennis and squash courts, swimming pool and bar), a large residence for the high commissioner (used a handful of times in six months, yet which retains a full-time staff) and another housing compound (totally empty) to cater for only nine UK officers.

Shouldn't questions be asked in your parliament?

NOVEMBER 19:
HELP The Birds afternoon at the Fishing Lodge, Mander Car Park, Grafham Water. Contact: tel: (0480) 812660. Bring a hammer.

Hunts Post

FUNNY OLD WORLD

● "If we can catch this Mitchell guy, we'll throw the book at him," Police Officer Morgan Fletcher assured Nashville reporters. "We're not sure if what he's doing actually is rape, because the women all consent, but we're bound to be able to get him on something. It could be rape by fraud."

The wanted man, Raymond Mitchell III,

45, has become known in the Nashville area as Captain Fantasy. "He phones women late at night, pretending to be their boyfriend. He says he has a head cold, which is why he sounds strange. He then tells them to unlock their door, undress, put on a blindfold, smear their nipples with Jello, then wait for him in bed. Then he comes in, has sex with them, and leaves again. One woman let him do this twice a week for two months before she found out that it wasn't her boyfriend on the phone. Or on her." *(The Washington Post, 3/2/95. Spotter — Gerald W. Wheeler)*

—●—

● "What goes down my throat is my affair and it is impertinent of anyone to suggest I change my diet," declared Somsong Thanopwattana, when confronted by reporters from the *Thai Rath* newspaper. "Nowadays my bowel movements are smoother than I have ever known them. Never in my life have I felt better. These quack doctors know nothing."

Thanopwattana, a mechanic at the Ban Bua Chum garage, north of Bangkok, vigorously defended his favourite foods. "I first tried eating lube grease five years ago, out of curiosity, and found it delicious, and slippery upon the tongue. Soon I began eating lube grease sandwiches, which for me are just like bread and honey, and drinking autolube for refreshment. 20/50 is best, the others are too thin. I drink three litres a day. My daughter Jeerawat has tried to talk me out of the habit, but I will not stop. These foods are tasty and nutritious, and constipation is now a thing of the past."

However Malinee Sukkawejchaworakit, Thanopwattana's doctor, insisted that the diet was highly dangerous. "The grease is building up inside his body, and he must stop before it is too late. Lube grease causes farts and, in gaseous form, it is highly combustible. I wouldn't want to be near the man if he passed wind near a naked flame. I predict he'll go out with one hell of a bang." *(Associated Press, 13/1/95. Spotter — IRN-ITN Radio)*

—●—

● *"The court acknowledges that the five accused suffered the unluckiest possible start to their new year," magistrate Andrew Johnson told his Canberra court while passing sentence. "Under the circumstances, you are all dismissed with a caution."*

Robin Croft, representing all five defendants, earlier summarised what took place on New Year's Eve. "My clients were celebrating during the afternoon in Sydney, but were expected at a party in Canberra that night. They set off on the 350-mile journey by car but, a few miles outside Sydney, driver number one was stopped for speeding and dangerous driving, failed a breath test, and was booked. Driver number two then took over, and was stopped half an hour later for driving through a stop sign. He too was over the limit and was booked.

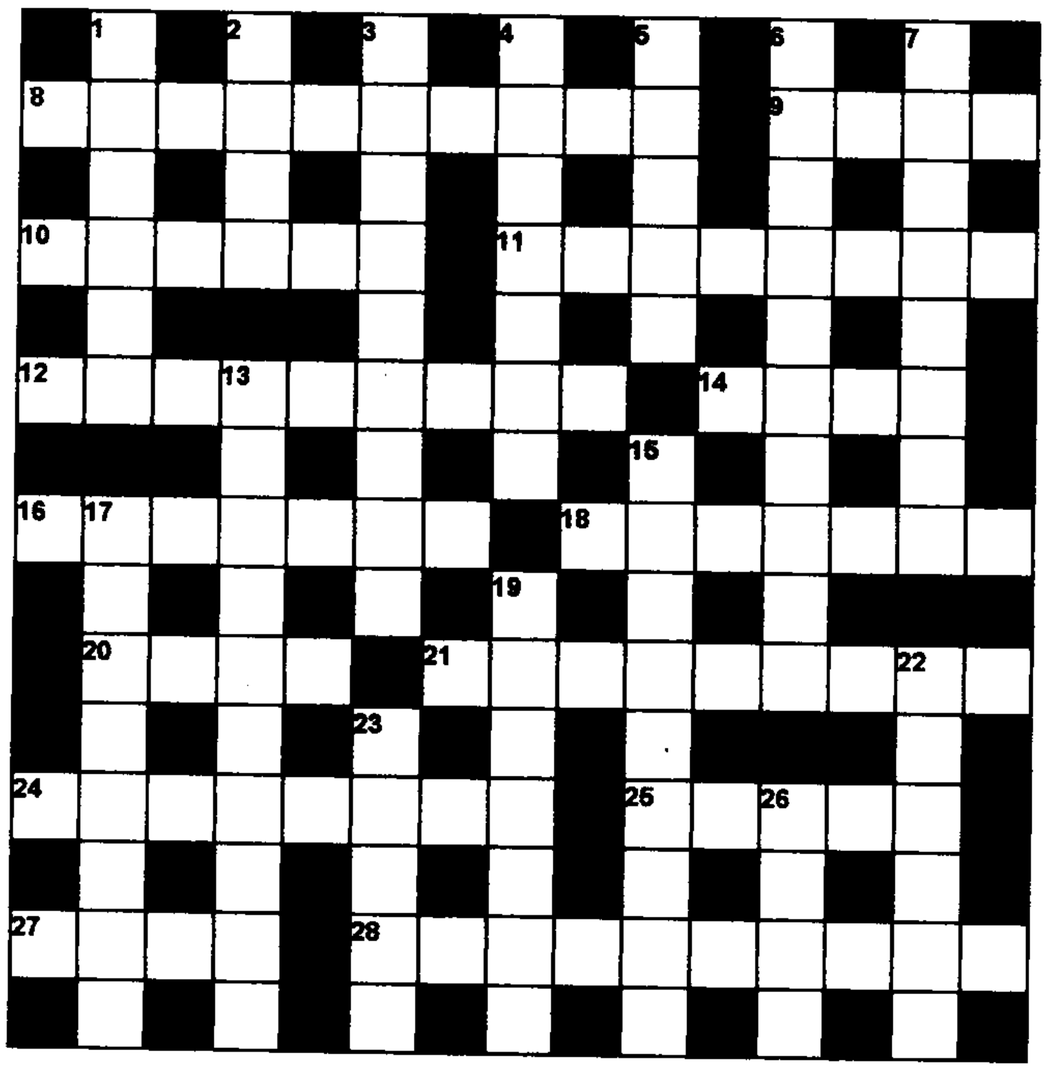
"The third driver took the wheel for two hours but, when he was stopped for failing to indicate a left turn, he also failed the breath test. He was replaced by driver number four, a learner, who had an uneventful drive until the car burst a tyre, four hours after leaving Sydney. While they were changing the wheel, a patrol car stopped and booked driver number four for parking without lights. They made him take a breath test too, and he failed it. The fifth man in the car thought he was safe, but he was wrong. The police decided that, because he was in the passenger seat, he was supervising the L-driver, so they breathalysed him and he failed too. With no one left to drive, they had to abandon the car by the roadside, and travel the last few miles by taxi. And when they went next day to retrieve it, the windscreen was smashed, all four tyres and the radio had been stolen, and someone had urinated over the seats." (Sydney Morning Herald, 6/1/95. Spotter — Richard Armstrong)

Compiled by

Victor Lewis-Smith

EYE CROSSWORD 24 by Cyclops

£100 Winner STEVE KENT



ACROSS

8 Post Office back-tracking situation exploited by Blair's lot (10)
9 (see 12)
10 Familiar beastly member — but no penetrating Thatcher (6)
11 A bit of leg and sham, we hear, makes a party (4,4)
12/9 Figure linked with row best defied by Tory rebels (5-4,4)
14 It's a pig keeping neutral as an earnest tv presenter (4)
16 Crestfallen Democrats carrying president who's had his day (7)
18 Prince Charles as viewed by the kids? (3-4)
20 American arsehole's a laughing-stock (4)
21 Campaigner's bollocks covered with crumpled poster (9)
24 Paisley seen on screen daily (8)
25 A status symbol Maxwell finally went off? (5)
27 It takes guts backing obscene material (4)
28 Victoria used it to take the piss, say, about the likes of Edward (3,5,2)

DOWN

1 Talk of school concealing leak (6)
2 Major convenience abroad (4)
3 Eve's sad flirty bust (5,4)
4 Hurd is sententiously holding views opposed to the official line (7)
5 Edwina — nerd, but not completely stupid (5)
6 A sign of Harvey's spirit measures? (3,7)
7 Domestic strife was Charles's downfall (5,3)
13 Elite circle gets swine (english) mostly responsible for putting Major into power (10)
15 Awfully loyal Ritz VIP friendly with Michael (3,6)
17 Short, for example, work on brief afternoon shift (6,2)
19 Publicity since splitting up spawned by Di and Charles (7)
22 Prescott: a wanker with capital stashed away (6)
23 It's definitely the cops — shit! (5)
26 Bang — and what you might get as a result? (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 31.03.95. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 23

ACROSS: 7 Voyeur 8 Near East 10/17ac Marginal seat 11/23 Oliver Reed 12 Sheath 14 Fair game 15 Echo 16 Potty 17 (see 10) 18 Swastika 20 Strike 21 Static 22 Star Wars 24 Charisma 25 Exocet.

DOWN 1 Goya 2 Belgrano 3 French 4 Anal 5 Majority 6 Peking 9 Sperm bank 13 Hackwatch 14 Fatwa 16 Princess 17 Screw you 19 Satire 20 Shares 22 Shag 23 (see 11).

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

I am in no small measure not inconsiderably very angry with Mr Clinton. He has spoilt my Irish peace process by agreeing to be photographed with Mr Adams at the White House. This has made me very, very cross indeed. Does Mr Clinton not realise that Mr Adams is a terrorist?

Mr Hurd then told me that he had arranged a historic trip for me to Israel to meet somebody called Mr Arafat. "Who is he?" I asked. "Let us just say," said Mr Hurd, "that it will do you a lot of good to be photographed with him."

Fair enough, but in the meantime I decided to send Mr Clinton a very tough letter, telling him exactly what I think of him.

This is how it went:

Dear Mr Clinton,

You probably don't remember me, but I have a special relationship with you. Oh yes! Anyway, how are you? I am fine. My wife Norman sends her regards to your wife Mrs Clinton.

Yours sincerely

John Major

P.S. I think you should know that Mr Adams is a terrorist, and it would be a very bad idea for you to meet him.

P.P.S. If you meet him I will put you in one of my books.

Tuesday

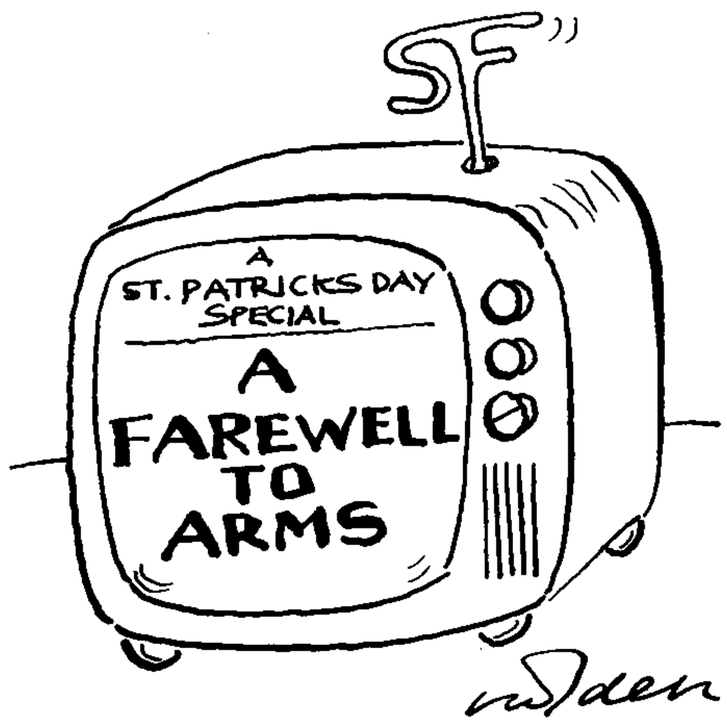
Today I arrived in a place called Gaza Strip. It is very hot. Apparently I am the first world leader to come here since Mr Arafat took over, apart from the prime minister of Iceland and the foreign minister of Mauritius. Mr Arafat met me at the airport and we drove round his new country.

When we had finished five minutes later we went back to the hotel, where the receptionist said that there was a phone call for "a Mr Major". Was there anyone of that name with my party? "Who is it?" I asked. "It is the President of the United States of America," she replied. "Tell him I am in a meeting," I said firmly, just like Mr Clarke does when I ring him up. That will show Mr Clinton just how annoyed I am for meddling in the affairs of countries he knows nothing about.

Wednesday

Today I gave Mr Arafat a present as a gesture of goodwill for his peacemaking efforts. It was six armoured cars, which he can use to round up all his opponents in the new Palestinian democracy. In exchange he gave me a towel, which Norman was very pleased with. She told him that it was just what we wanted, as the one with daffodils on that we had bought in the Lake District had got a burn mark on it when I used it to take a portion of oven-ready chips out of the cooker. While we were exchanging our gifts a mobile phone rang on the belt of one of Mr Arafat's bodyguards. It was Mr Clinton trying to get in touch with me.

"I know he is with you," said the President to Mr Arafat, "because I have just seen him on our satellite." I waved the phone away with a very statesmanlike gesture. "Tell him I am much too busy to talk to him," I said, "because I am in a meeting with you." Mr Arafat was obviously very impressed by this example of top-level diplomacy in action. "Clinton is just trying to cash in by sucking up to a famous terrorist," I explained. Mr Arafat rolled his eyes and tapped the side of his head with his finger in agreement.



Thursday

At 2 o'clock this morning I was woken up by the phone ringing in our hotel room. It was Mr Clinton. "I am sorry," I said, "I cannot talk to you because I am asleep," and put the phone down. In fact I was not asleep, because his call had woken me up, but I was not going to tell him that.

A few minutes later the phone rang again. This time it was my brother Terry. He said: "Bill Clinton's been trying to get hold of you John. Where have you been? He said you were asleep, but you sound pretty awake to me." "It is of no concern of yours whether I am awake or asleep," I said, in the voice I use to call Mr Blair a dimwit in the House of Commons. "Kindly keep your nose out of world affairs. You should stick to something you are good at like writing books. Not that you are any good at that either, since they are full of mistakes, like saying that I fell off the donkey when we were at Margate. It wasn't Margate, it was Ramsgate. And it wasn't a donkey, it was my bike." "That's OK, John," he said, "I'll correct it in the paperback edition, which incidentally is coming out next week, 100,000 print run. Oh, and I promised my new friend Bill that he would get an autographed copy thanking him for his great work for peace in Northern Ireland." At this point I hung up and told the hotel switchboard that they were to put no more calls through to our room, particularly if they were from the President of the United States or my brother Terry.

Friday

When I arrived home I was very surprised to see a placard at the airport saying " 'Economy No Good' Says Clarke". When I left three days ago everything had been fine.

When I got back to Number 10 I immediately rang up Mr Clarke to ask what on earth he meant. His secretary sounded very embarrassed and said that he could not speak to me because he was in a meeting. "Ask him to ring me very urgently," I said. Then my telephone rang. It was Mr Clinton. "I'm sorry," I said. "I cannot speak to you. I am talking to someone who is in a meeting."

I waited several hours for Mr Clarke to ring me back, and eventually I received a fax from his assistant. "It's very simple," it read. "We talk down the economy now, until you're chucked out, and then, when I become Prime Minister, I can tell the country that everything's coming up roses. Neat, eh?"

Saturday

Mr Clarke has made another very stupid gaffe. He said there was a disposable nappy factory in a place called Consett which is in the North of England when there isn't because it was closed down.

"Nappies are not the only things that are disposable," I told Mr Clarke, using my special Air-of-Menace voice. "You are right, John," he said with a laugh.

Sunday

Good news! Mr Clarke has not made a gaffe today (so far at least). Clearly my talking-to has had some effect. Oh yes.

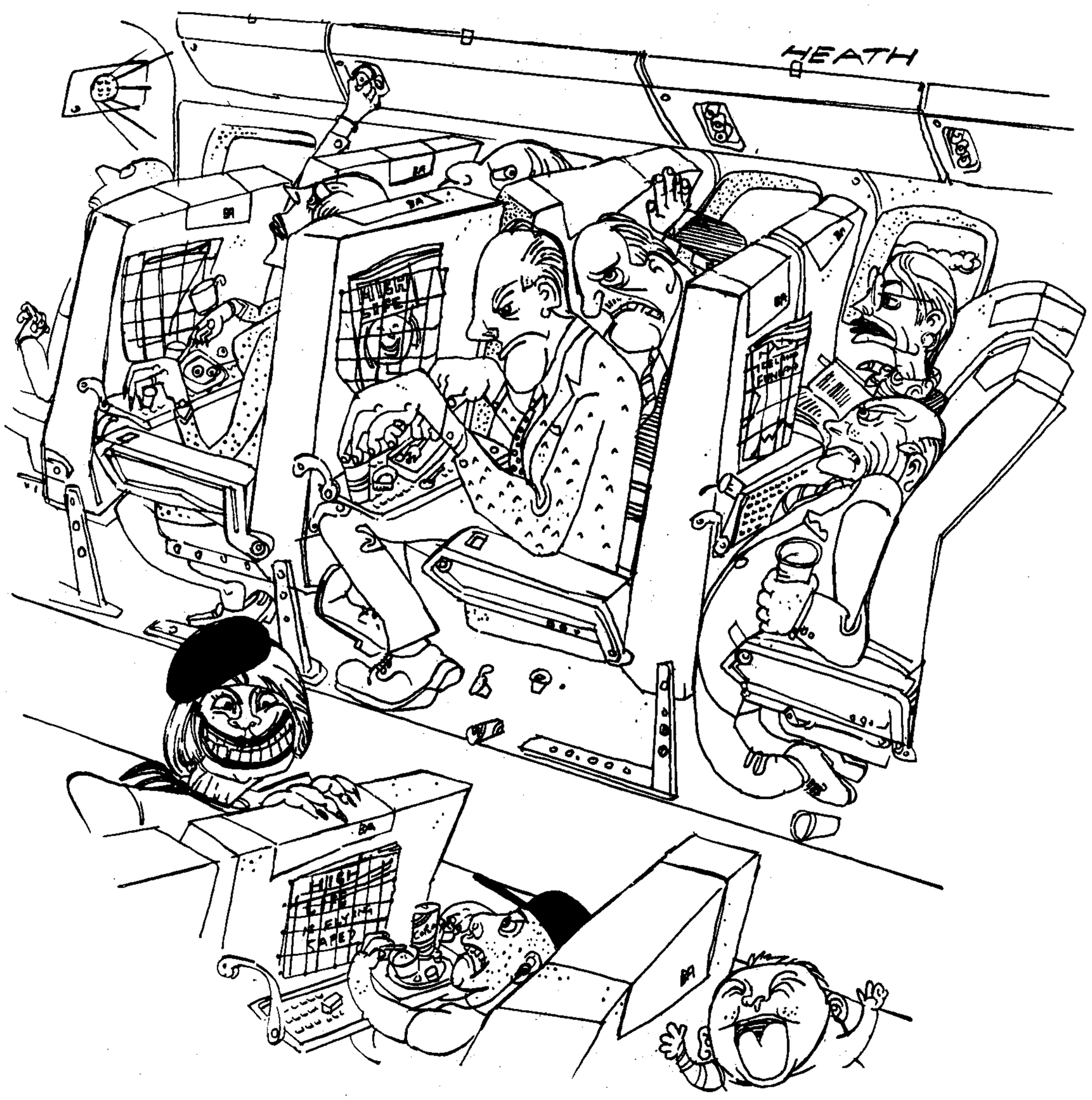
After lunch the phone rang again. "Yes he is here," Norman said in a friendly way before I could say that I wasn't.

Mr Clinton said he was doing everything to persuade the IRA to give up their arms. "That is my job," I said. "And anyway you are only using the whole Irish question to boost your sagging popularity."

"So tell me all about it, buddy," he said in what I considered to be in no small measure a flippant manner. He then told me to "get a life" and rang off.

Great Bores Of Today

"...bing bong! this is Captain Colleymore speaking we are now cruising at 38,000 feet at 432 knots and passengers seated on the port side can just see Bruges under the cloudbank which is causing a little turbulence so I advise you to keep your seatbelts fastened and could I remind you for your own safety and convenience that this airline operates a no-smoking policy in all sections of the aircraft our chief steward today is Chris and the cabin staff are Charlene Mandy and Robin who will shortly be visiting you with a range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages in the seat in front of you you will find full details of the duty-free goods which are on offer during the flight in about twenty minutes we shall be making our final approach to Limoges and passengers on the starboard side will get a very good view of the porcelain factory prior to landing air traffic control confirm that there are no delays so sit back relax and enjoy your flight bing! bong! Limoges have just told us that we are caught in a holding pattern due to a little hiccup on the ground and our ETA is now 1435 local time don't forget to adjust your watch to local time and the temperature on the ground is 7^{o} celsius that's 48^{o} fahrenheit and conditions are overcast thank you for choosing to fly with us and we hope to see you again soon on behalf of myself Captain Colleymore and my co-pilot David Hennessey we wish you bon voyage for your onward journey bing! bong! mesdames messieurs c'est Capitaine Colleymore qui parle..."



COMPUTER PORNOGRAPHY & VIDEO GAMES

Free information sheets for schools and parents.

Contact Jane Osmond at the National Council for Educational Technology

RIGHT. I'M OFF TO THE T.V. STUDIO TO DO MY BIT FOR COMIC RELIEF.
GOOD FOR YOU, GARY.
IT'S GOING TO BE A REAL CHARITY MARATHON THIS YEAR. DOESN'T FINISH UNTIL 3 IN THE MORNING.
CRIKEY. YOU'LL BE SHATTERED, MATE.
BEFORE YOU GO: "DON'T FORGET YOUR NOSE."
NO NEED. THERE'LL BE PLENTY THERE AT THE STUDIO FOR US TO USE, I'M SURE.
BETTER TAKE THIS STUPID LITTLE THING TO WEAR THOUGH I SUPPOSE.

FOOTBALL'S DAY OF SHAME

Entire Neasden Squad Arrested In Dawn Swoop

by **E.I. Addio**, Our Man In The New Stand With The Mobile Phone And The Card Saying "Mandy's Spanking Nights — 0182-6473"

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations early this morning when Inspector "Knacker of the Yard" Knacker arrested the entire Neasden football team at 17 different addresses in the north-west London area.

Charges brought against the Windolene North Circular Relegation League low-fliers include:

GBH
Drunk and disorderly behaviour
International drug dealing
Derivatives trading
Gross indecency in the public toilets of the George V Memorial Park
Membership of the KGB
The assassination of the late John F. Kennedy outside a Dallas nightclub
Non-payment of community charge

Shock

The tight-lipped Neasden supremo, Ron Knee, 57, said on the *Today* programme: "I can expect that some of my lads may have been guilty of these sort of offences while under the influence of high spirits.

"But what is beyond comprehension is the allegation by police that Neasden could deliberately have thrown the vital Dollis Hill derby in return for payment from a mysterious Malaysian businessman Mr Hu Flung Bung."

Horror

Mr Knee was referring to the claims widely reported in the press that three top Neasden stars were involved in a conspiracy to allow Dollis Hill to score an unlimited number of goals in the final match of last year's championships.

The players, Eddie Wilde-beeste, Hans Rijksmuseum and the one-legged netminder Wally Foot, were alleged to have received gifts such as a free drink at the Boston Arms, a complimentary subscription to the North Circular Weekly Freesheet and even a cash payment of 25p in used 1p coins.

Probe

Video footage, taken on a camcorder by Mr Sidney Bonkers, Chair of the Neasden F.C. Supporters Club (motto: "Hitler was right"), clearly shows that the three accused players spent most of the game sitting on the touchline, playing cards and drinking lager.

At one point Mr Foot, the Neasden goalie, can clearly be seen cheering on the Dollis Hill team and pointing to his own goalmouth, shouting: "Stick it in there lads, or I won't get paid."

Said an unrepentant Knee, dismissing the charges: "There is nothing new here. They could have filmed that any week.

"My players always look as though they are trying to lose — and 10 times out of 10 they do."

That controversial scoreline in full

Dollis Hill Athletico	86
(Pevsner o.g. 17, Whittam-Smith 6, D. Lawson 2, N. Lawson 5, Bismarck 1, Lees-Milne 12, H. Montgomery-Massingberd 5, Libby Purves 4 *[That's enough goalscorers. Ed.]*)	
Neasden F.C.	0

GLENDA SLAGG

The Terror of the Tabloids

GOOD riddance to Ronnie Kray, the monster whose idea of a fun night out was to shoot someone in the head!!?!

I say Ronnie was scum from his bloodstained boots to his brylcreemed bonce!?!

So he died a miserable death from smoking 140 fags a day!! Pity it wasn't 240 — then he would have left us sooner!!?

That's Glenda's verdict on this vermin of vice!!?

SHED a tear for big-hearted Ronnie Kray!?!

All right, so he was a bit of a psychopath and a killer!?!

But dear old Ronnie loved his Mum and never touched a toddler!?!

When Ronnie ruled the East End you could walk safely down to your local pub and get shot!?!

You can't do that now, Mister!?!!

HAVE you read the new Martin Amis??

Nor have I!!

Clear off sunshine, with your 500 grand and your fancy dental work and give us a break!?!!

STOP PRESS:

So the Spanish fishermen are trying to get their hands on our Canadian cousins' fish!!?!?

Doesn't it make you sick!??! (And I don't mean the fish, mister!?!)

Who do they think they are, these swarthy Don Pedros with their sombreros and castanets a-crawlin' and a-trawlin' where they don't belong!?!

Get back to tormenting bulls, amigos, and leave our poor lil 'ole hake and halibut alone!?!!

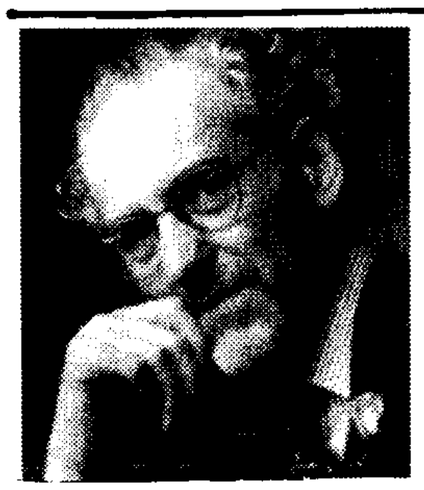
HERE they are, Glenda's Mad March Machos;

RUPERT PENNANT-RAE. He's the deputy governor of the BONK of England! Geddit??!?

CHRIS EUBANK. I'll go a few rounds with you any night of the week! Ewhunk!!! (Geddit???)

DON JAIME DE MANICHARLAR Y SAENZ DE TEJADA — crazy name, crazy guy!?!!

Byeeeeee!



A Consultant writes

AS a consultant, I am often asked: "Doctor, where are you going?"

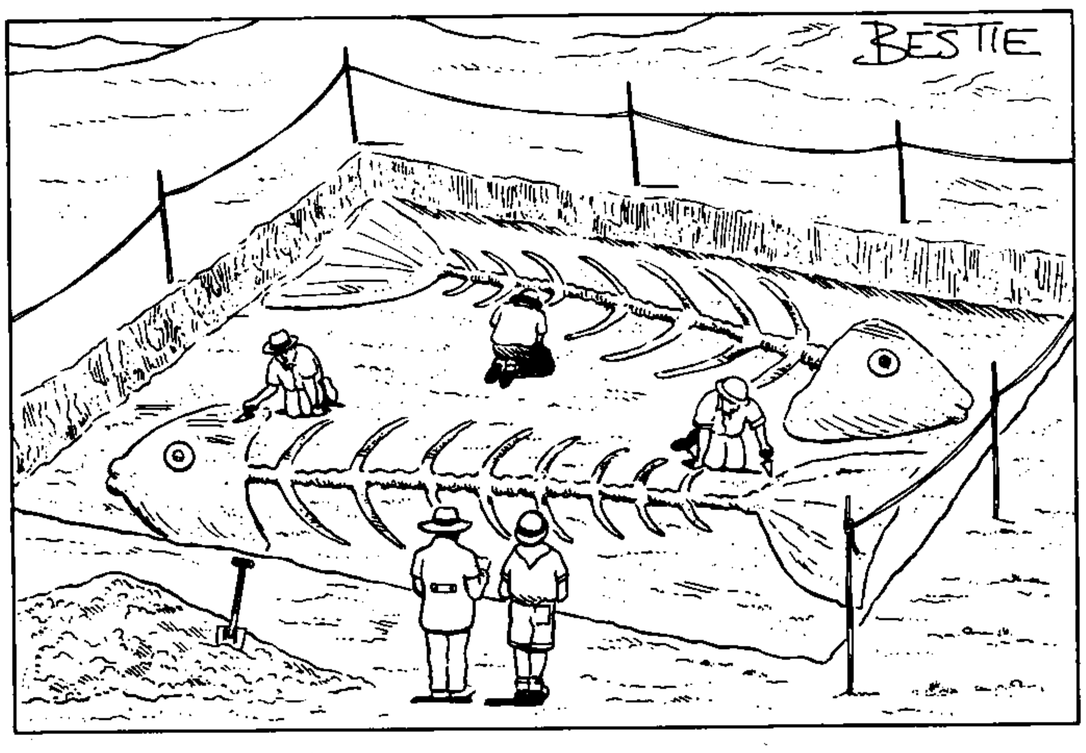
The simple answer is that I do not have time to answer questions from NHS patients because I am in such a hurry to get to the Health Cheque Clinic in Harley Street.

This is known as Consultant's Elbow, and what happens is that ordinary patients get shoved to one side in favour of those on corporate schemes.

The condition has a full medical name, but this is available only to fee-paying patients.

Sorry I've got to go. My bleeper is telling me that there is a table free at Quaglino's.

© *A. Consultant.*



Archaeologists believe they've found the exact spot where Jesus fed the 5,000

Bishop admits relationship with God

by Our Religious Affairs Correspondent **Clifford Longford**

THE Church of England was cast into further turmoil today when a senior Bishop confessed that he had enjoyed what he called "a close relationship" with God for many years.

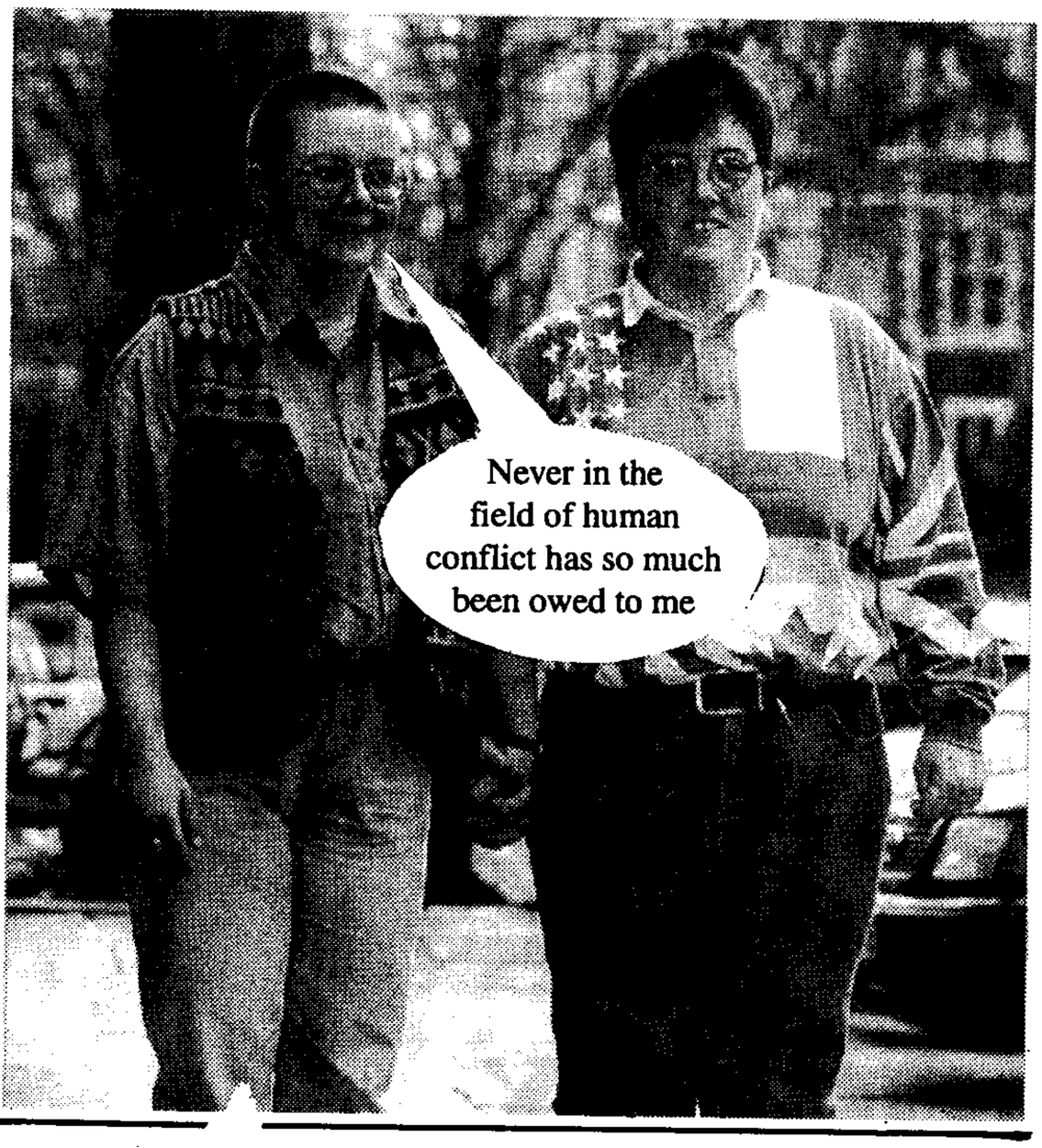
"Yes," he said. "I am a practising Christian and have been for a long time. I got into this habit when I was a young priest and have successfully covered it up in order to advance in my career."

The bishop then admitted that he talked to God on a regular basis, sometimes up to three or four times a day.

"I have always been ashamed of this," he explained, "and now I have decided to retire and take up a more suitable job."

For legal reasons the bishop cannot be named. He is the Right Reverend Robin Goodfellow, Suffragan Bishop of Bishop Auckland.

COMPENSATION CLAIM BY RAF LESBIAN



Poetry Corner

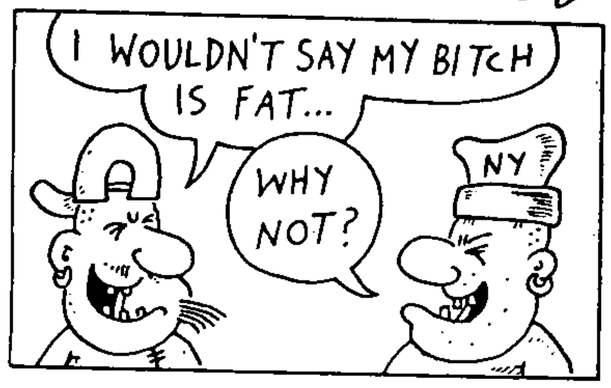
In Memoriam: Spitting Image (1984-1995)

So. Farewell then
Spitting Image.
You have been axed.

Keith always said
You had gone off.
And now
You have.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

LAUGHTER WITH THE BOYZ-N-THE HOOD



QUENTIN CRISPANTINO

That St Patrick's Day procession in full

Start at O'Malley's Genuine Auld Ireland Pizza Parlour East 417th Street, New York.

1st Float
(in shape of Giant Shamrock)
St Gerald of Adams shaking hands with President Clintstone.

1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Security Vehicles
with men in sunglasses running alongside.

2nd Float
(in shape of Giant Armalite Rifle)
Mr M. McGuinness surrounded by armed members of the Sinn Fein peace movement.

1st Band Fife and Drum John Majorettes
Led by Paddy O'Mayhew, playing a medley of traditional Irish airs, including *Cock-Ups And Mussels, Never On Bloody Sunday* and *When Irish IRAs Are Smiling*.

The Massed Noraid Tin Rattlers
Led by New York's own Master Tin Rattler Tip O'Rarey collecting "Dollars For Peace" from the crowd.

1st Episcopal Stretch-Limousine
Cardinal Archbishop Shameless O'Gunrunner, Archbishop of Armalite, accompanied by his Chaplain Father O'Lovechild.

3rd Float
(in shape of Giant TV Studio)
A cross-section of Irish-American celebrities, including Mickey Rourke, Mickey Rooney, Mickey O'Mouse, Mike O'Tyson, and the late J.F. Kennedy, accompanied by Sister Whoopee O'Goldberg.

Other Floats
There then followed a number of floats dedicated to the Irish-American Gay and Lesbian Republican Community (Ms Mollie O'Spart and friend). *(That's enough parade. Ed)*

St Coke's

The following Expulsions have been awarded. The Heroin Award: J.P.W.B. Street-Value (Spliffs). The Ecstasy Prize: L.S.D. Brayne-Dedd (Acids). The Marijuana Exhibitions: Jamie Reefer-Madness (Rizlas); Jocelyn Cannabis-Smythe (Poppers); Prince Onanuga-Ganja (Tabs). The Amphetamine Scholarship: not awarded this year due to premature demise of all candidates. Uppers will be taken on Downers Day.

Victoria Coren writes:

So what? A few blokes were expelled from Eton for taking a few tabs.

Who didn't? We all did in the Sixth Form, where incidentally I still am.

Honestly!

© *Hastingstrash Productions.*

Disabilities/support required

0 You do not have a disability nor are you aware of any additional support requirements in study or accommodation.

1 You hae dyslexia.

Application form, Southampton Institute

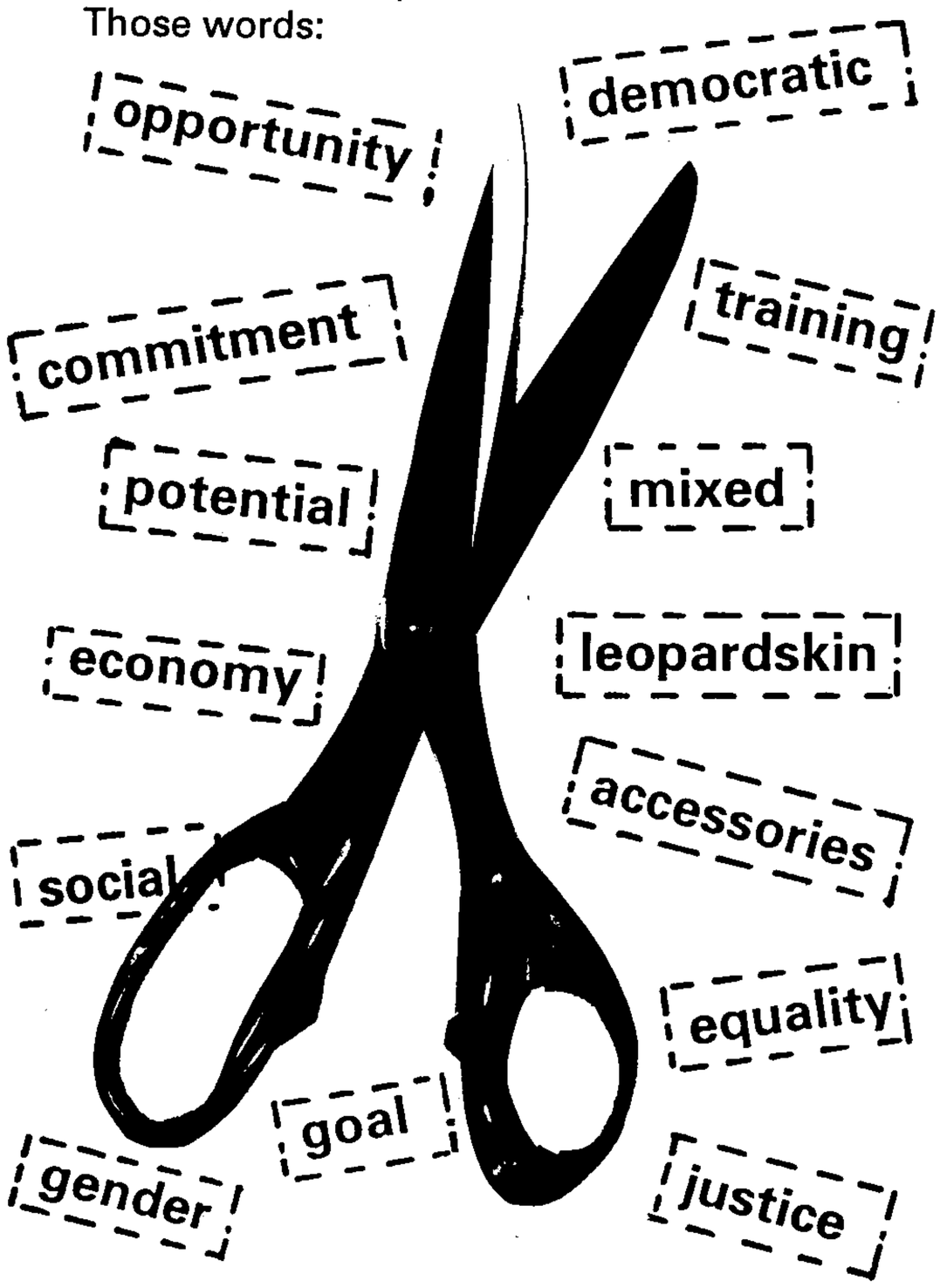
MAKE YOUR OWN CLAUSE FOUR

A Private Eye Cut Out 'n' Keep Service

Now is your chance to redefine Socialism in the comfort and privacy of your own home.

All you have to do is to cut out these key words, arrange them in the order of your choice and — hey presto! — you're Tony Blair!

Those words:



Send to Mr Jonathan Prescott, Word Processor House, London SW94P 1LP or email gobbledegook@walworth.org.uk

YES! IT'S RED ROSE DAY

BRITAIN'S top comedians, led by madcap Tony Blair of TV's Labour Party, are asking everyone to wear one of these fabulous new red roses!

But this year they are different! As soon as you put on the rose it turns **blue**!! Amazing!

Every red rose bought will provide the following:

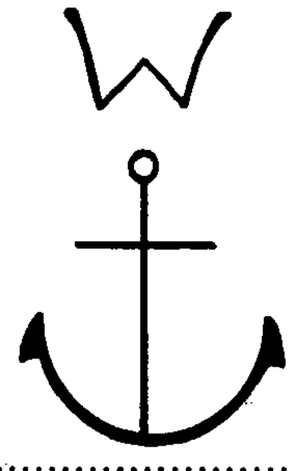
- **A much-needed home in Downing Street for Tony Blair and his family.**
- **An urgently required job for unemployed Scottish chancellor Gordon Brown.**
- **Greatly desired power for all the rest of them.**

REMEMBER! IT'S ALL IN A GOOD CLAUSE (4)!

SUPERMODELS

Neil Kerber

The Artiste formerly known as Prince is now to be known as...



ARCHBISHOP BLAIREY BATTLES FOR NEW CREED TO 'MOVE C of E INTO 21ST CENTURY'

by Our Religious Staff
Rabbi Lionel Blair

IN A DARING move to bring the Church of England into line with "the needs and aspirations of 1990s Britain", the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr George Blairey has decided to scrap the outdated Apostle's Creed.

"This mission statement," he said, "was written at a very different time more than 1500 years ago. It is no longer relevant to the modern world."

The Wondrous Cross-head

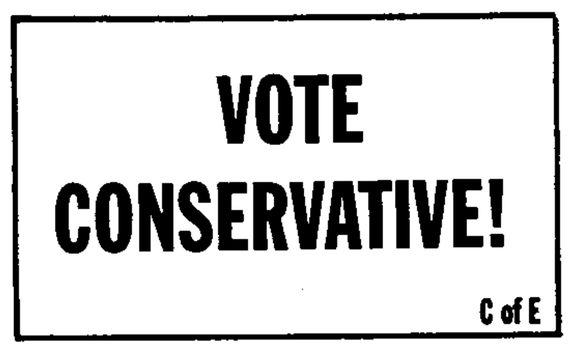
Blairey claims that "the spirit of the old creed will be maintained, although specific phrases will be dropped if they are deemed to be incompatible with the changing values of Britain's new pluralist society".

Out go "the communion of saints", "the forgiveness of sins" and any reference to the resurrection.

In come "the importance of inter-personal relationships", "toleration towards those of varied sexual orientation" and "opposition to the exporting of live veal calves."

In addition Bishop Blairey has appointed a team of media consultants, the firm of Hargleby, Gargleby and Beelzebub, to mount an "Easter offensive" on the nation's advertising hoardings, designed to woo the millions of potential consumers back into a "worship environment".

Among the mould-breaking poster designs the team has come up with are:



MAJOR IN TALKS

HOW BRITAIN'S TOP FIVE-A-SIDE FOOTBALL TEAM WILL LOOK

Parkhurst FC 1995

Grobbelaar

Hans Segers

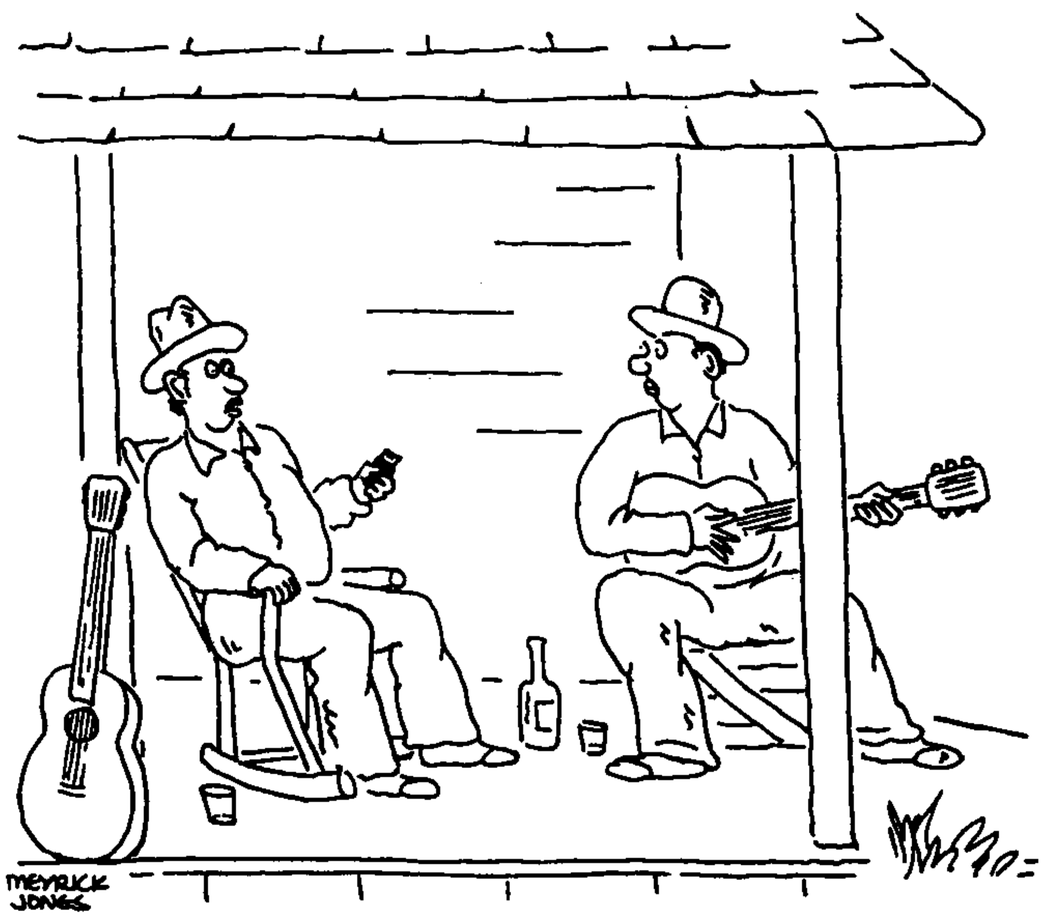
Cantona **Wise** **Fashanu**

Manager: **Terry Venables**
Strip: Black Arrows

Rhymes For Today

They seek him here, they seek him there
They seek that Stephen Fry everywhere.
Is he in France, or is he in Bruges?
Who gives a toss?

Adapted from the original Hungarian by Simon Gray.



"It's this damned Prozac. I haven't had the blues for weeks"

An Open Letter to Mr Peter Tatchell from BlackRage!, the armed wing of the National Association of Blackmailers (NAB)

Dear Peter,

This letter is written in a spirit of loving hatred from a group of blackmailers who have had the courage to come out and admit to their blackmailness.

We have evidence in our possession that you, Peter Tatchell, are one of us, i.e. a practising blackmailer. And yet you consistently deny this when you appear in the media, e.g. the *Today* programme (on which, incidentally, you were pathetic).

We have no intention of giving this evidence to the tabloid press.

However you should remember that there are a lot of blackmailers out there who have to suffer prejudice, discrimination and blackmailophobia because people in the public eye like you fail to set an example by coming out honestly and admitting where your true inclinations lie – i.e. approaching other men and threatening to expose them. Unless we hear within 24 hours that you have openly declared yourself as a blackmailer, we shall have no alternative but to present the information we have to the tabloids, i.e. the Daily Blackmail.

Signed

a friend

THE PRIZEWINNER

A Play In One Act by Harold Pinter O.M

(Scene: A draughty hall somewhere in South London. In the semi-darkness several hundred smartly-dressed people are sitting on gold chairs around small tables. Waiters circulate menacingly with plates of black olives. There is an air of hushed expectancy, broken only by the occasional slamming of a door to the kitchens, stage left. In the distance we can hear the sound of traffic noise, with perhaps a police siren. On a raised podium in front of the assembled crowd, a man in a dark suit begins to speak quietly into a microphone.)

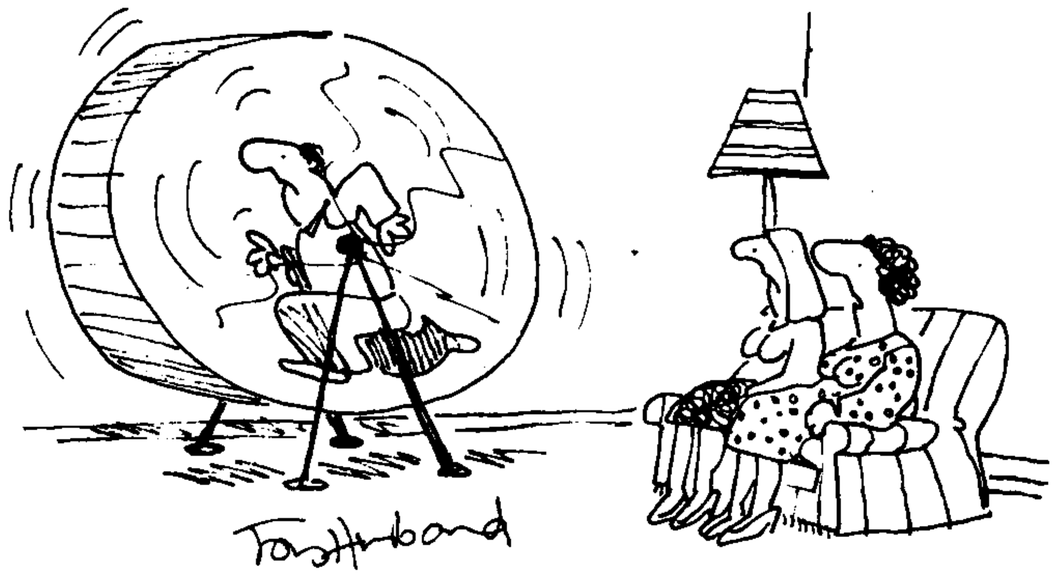
First Man: And the first winner of the Cohen Prize for Outstanding Lifetime's Services to Literature is the world's greatest living playwright *(Looks down at card)*...Mr Harold Pinter.

(There is a faint ripple of applause. A man in a black polo neck and dark glasses walks slowly up to the microphone. There is a very long pause before the man speaks)

Second Man:... er... BASTARDS!

(Curtain)

© Pintertrash Productions 1995.



"Oh, George was reared by hamsters"

Nigel Dumpster Mail Diary

One is not amused !

■ IN AN astonishing departure from Royal protocol, The Queen has personally confronted embarrassed Home Secretary Michael Howard, I can reveal. Her Majesty spotted Howard while attending a reception for the Prince of Wales's Business in the Community Trust (sponsored by Barings Bank).

She immediately dashed across the crowded Palace banqueting hall and publicly upbraided an obviously shocked Howard, repeatedly jabbing him in the chest and raising her voice to the astonishment of guests nearby.

"The Queen was furious," I am told. "She kept demanding to know why it was impossible to receive Channel One, the superb new 24-hour information and entertainment service, while staying at Windsor."

"Amazingly Howard tried to fob her off by saying that the highly acclaimed Channel One was only available to a few people with cable in London."

"The Queen was having none of it," my mole explains. "She told him that that was a completely unsatisfactory state of affairs. If she could read about the remarkable Channel One in the Scottish edition of the Daily Mail,

then she should be able to see it there, and indeed throughout the rest of the Commonwealth."

"Howard was told in no uncertain terms that he should immediately repeal the Broadcasting Act, abolish the BBC licence fee, relax all rules on cross-media ownership and allow Lord Rothermere to buy ITV. Needless to say he was completely unable to counter her arguments."

Last night Sir David English, chairman of the innovative and authoritative Channel One, said "I am delighted to hear that Her Majesty has joined the campaign to have these needless restrictions on broadcasters being owned by the same few people who own all the newspapers."

100% pass

BROWNHILL'S Community School is celebrating success.

Sixty-three students were entered for the first time for the Institute of Environmental Health Office's Basic Food Hygiene Certificate - and 62 passed.

Lichfield Mercury

DIARY

The Prescott day starts in cheery bloody fashion. So what's wrong with that, eh? I can't see anything wrong with that at all, if you want my opinion, so why the implication? EH? Talk about bloody snobs. I mean, really. I've had it up to here, I really have.

But let's not get heated about it. Let's cool it, shall we? No need to bloody fall out. On with the description of the typical Prescott day. "Morning Good," I say to the postman when he exacts his due deliverance of the appropriate postal assortment in question.

"About the weather shame it's a," he replies. I strenuously and vociferously agree with all the strength at my disposal. To think that in this modern day and age, it's been pissing down for a three or four months — and not a word of apology from this Tory so-called Government. Not a word. Bloody typical. I don't know about you, but I've had a bellyful of this lot. Stepping outside their own front doors, ordinary, decent people have been absolutely drenched with rain, sleet and heaven knows what. Wet soaking through all way the. So much for the so-called Charter's Citizen, that's what I say.

Met President Mitterrand Tuesday last for full and frank discussions of basic points and fundamental principles and what-have-yous. Can't say I took to the bloke. Touch too hoity-toity for me, with all his wees and nawns and bon-bloody-jaws. I thought I caught him sneering when I said come on sa var, which is French for how-dos, so I said to him: "Don't patronise me, mush," and that put him in his place. But he's a socialist and I'm a socialist, no complaints there, so I put it to him straight, I said: "We in the Labour party are very pro-Europe, very pro-France, for all the cock-ups you made in the last war, and don't tell me you didn't. Your hands weren't entirely spotless yourself either, were they, Francois? Only joking! Well, yes and no." There I go again — I'm a straight talker, that's me. Sorry, but I am. But let's not bring the whole collaboration issue up again, eh? Leaves a nasty taste in the gullet, I find.

Valuable practice, this sort of diplomatic chinwag, for tying our strengthenings in Europe. And come the next election if Tony is sensible and listens to the great movement of grass roots of this party of ours, he'll be marking me down to be Foreign Secretary in overall charge of the Foreign Office, what, as we all know, deals mainly with places far away — Africa, America, Europe, France, Germany, Formayugoslavia, even "Indo-China", whatever that is when it's at home!

THE RT. HON. JOHN PRESCOTT MP

You see, unlike others who shall remain nameless like that Beckett woman and Mr Gordon so-called bloody Brown, I've had the experience. I've travelled, matey. Oh, yes. For eight years I served as steward on the Cunard line, rising to night-crossing soft-drinks deputy assistant by the time of my departure. Tony recognises this experience as invalidable if we as a party are to forge our way in the outside world. In diffidence to this, he often invites me to his important summit meetings with world leaders and other big-wigs. "Before we get down to brass tacks," he says, as Monsieur Haw-hee-haw or President Von Fatarse gather round in their pricey well-pressed suits, "John here will only be too happy to take your orders for a soft drink or beverage", and I'm only too happy to oblige. Day tont, that's the name of the game. Though I'll tell you this for free. Quite a few of these Presidents and Von whatnots are pretty bloody stingy when it comes to tipping, and that's for sure.

Let's look to the future, shall we? Let's have the courage to be a bit modern. As I said at the last Labour conference — and I quote —

"I mean this Tory Government has for too long and I mean for definitely far too long this Tory Government has been doing things that let's face it are the things this Tory Government's been doing, I mean, what about this growth rate business, stuff that, and they've been doing it for far too long this Tory Government has been doing these things and I'm sick and tired of it and the way this Tory Government's been doing these things for just definitely too long, well, stuff that, let's face it comrades it's got to stop. Once and for all."

— and I admit this brought a standing ovation to their feet. But when we look forward — and I agree with Tony we've got to look forward, we can't just look back, I've made that quite clear in countless retrospective agreements — well, we when we look forward we still shouldn't forget the marvellous history of our great movement, and how the solidarity of the workers in the heyday of the Labour movement in the Sixties and Seventies brought this country to a total standstill on behalf of the workers as we argued for more conditions, and that can't be bad. So I this what is say, when we win the next election, the first thing we'll have to do is bring down the Government. And as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry I'll be perfectly positioned to do it, so we'll have a great victory on our hands.

As Tony says, if we're going to win the next election, we can't afford to ignore the middle-class vote, stuff 'em. What we are after is the consensus of the whole British nation, not just a tiny faction of fat-cats feathering their own nets. In five years time, we want to be leading this country of ours into the Twentieth century all together in one accord, without the traditional class warfare that has so dogged our industrial might. People of all classes — both working-class and fat-cats — must work together in the common purpose. Only by doing so can we promote tolerance and mutual respect. And if you don't agree, mush, you can come outside and say that.

And how does finally the Prescott day end? If ours is to be victory at the next election, we have to win the intelligentual debate, so I might work on my current political pamphlet — "The Socialist Answer to the Tory Government and Mass Unemployment", which is provisionally subtitled, "Stuff It Down Their Gobs" — before turning in for the night. I press the switch on my bedside light. Off goes the bulb. Typical. It's always the same since privati-bloody-sation. The overpaid fat-cats of the Electricity Companies, the silver spoon brigade, are so keen to grab our money they'll even plunge us into darkness at the flick of a switch. Downright disgrace, no two ways about it. And as Tony says, we in the Labour Party believe the problem can only be solved by coming up with a firm solution, not just to this, but to everything else, but first let's find out what we stand for because only then will we find the solution: frankly, that's the bold message we can't ignore to afford.

"I can't make my mind up – another pint or go home and surf the Internet"

BUFFALO, the staple diet of American Indians and prairie dogs, has arrived on British supermarket shelves as a lean, healthy meat of the future.

"Our in-house tests show that it should go well with customers," a Tesco spokeswoman said.

The Times

Bangkok's traffic commission, struggling to unclog the Thai capital's appalling congestion, has banned elephants from trunk roads and other city streets.

Bath Chronicle

Literary Review

All teeth and similes

The Information
Martin Amis
(Flamingo, £15.99)

WHY DO men write novels? Because of the dental work and the alimony, because of the anaconda-forearmed wrestle with fame, because they want to be like their dads, because of Julian and Salman and all the others, because they can't be happy or sad anymore — just middleaged and rich.

And then there are the reviewers, who come at night.

We go a long way back, Mart and me. We schmoozed together in the school library over *The Rachel Papers*; we ogled the jacket photo of *Dead Babies* (those titles! Mart was always *really fucking good* at titles); we bought the *New Statesman* when Mart was its hoity-toity literary editor. And we stuck together, Mart and me, through the fireworks of *Money*, through the patchwork of its increasingly winded successors, through all the fights and the fame-jockeying and the high-wire interviews, until we emerged into this bright, scary operating theatre world of mid-life crises, of aimings and blamings, and information.

Enmired in the spats with Antonia and Julian, weighed down by the half-million pound throwaways and the wall-to-wall publicity, Mart apparently feels that "sober literary consideration" might be escaping him. Here goes.

The Information, a long and (let it be whispered) rambling tale about a failed novelist who tries to lame a successful fellow-practitioner, will be a familiar read to longterm devotees of the Mart *oeuvre*, a kind of scrapbook of all that he does best and worst. There is the brooding west London locale (*Success, London Fields*); there is the personal appearance (*Money*); there are the multi-paragraph disquisitions on fags and kippered lungs (*Other People*). There are even — and I know Mart's not going to like me for saying this — the same metaphors. The bit about the Alsatian's tongue resembling a "fat scarf". It's a hoot, Mart, but you did it before with Keith Talent's dog in *London Fields*.

And so it goes on. And boy, does it go on. Mart never was a plot junkie. Mart never did bother too much about the hows and wheres, the whos and whyfores. And so *The Information*, whose central concerns and conceits might just have occupied a 50-page novella, is simply a series of descriptions in the inimitable Mart manner.

Those descriptions! You can read them in all the books by us sad, emulous under-40s — Self, Rayner, Rogers and so on — all those others. Pages on "The Warlock Club", where most of the cast hangs out, with its "mephitic banquette of cigarette smoke". A flock of birds which "reared up like a join-the-dots puzzle of a human face or fist". There is a problem here, though. Cigarette smoke hanging in the air doesn't look like a mephitic banquette; flocks of birds don't look like join-the-dots puzzles. They don't even look like inspired approximations of them. It's just Mart being clever.

But then, being clever is what Mart's all about. A clue to the novel's glamorous inconsistencies, its high-gloss, low-sensation sheen, comes in an oddly defensive jacket quote from Uncle Saul Bellow. "Martin Amis certainly uses a charged language. Anyone with that much feeling for words is bound to be accused of putting the words first." Not just the words, Saul baby. *The Information* isn't really a novel. It's a kind of drama documentary of a novel being written.

There Mart crouches under the crystal light before a sea of bowed heads. The voices hush as he bends to scribble a sentence, a corker, a real hooteroo, so funny in fact he lams himself on the back and shouts to let us know he's done it. The thing about Mart's writing (Thing? Quality? Dysfunction?) is that it draws attention to its own facility; everything else gets lost in the knuckle-whitening, heart-stopper of Will Mart Pull It Off?

Sometimes he does, and as usual there is a heartening quota of figurative wonder (check out the black guy's nose which resembles "the back of a black bullfrog squatting on his face"). The rest, the whole crate of effortful, dogged metaphors, is just Mart parodying Mart.

But that's post-modernism for you — and they're so *easy*, these post-modern novels. All the old obligations to character and plausibility, the way people live their lives: they're gone, they went away, and all that's left is the proud spectacle of the writer writing. Oh gosh yes. *The writer writing*. Let's be honest, Mart. I gave up on page 113 and went back to my Hilary Mantel novel — real people, real problems, the whole teeming world that exists beyond the shadow of the Westway, and no pissing about.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

☐ DILLONS, the book chain saved by Thorn EMI, has dumped a big debt on its former advertising agency, Leisure Advertising.

The chain refused to reestablish the contract under the new owners because Leisure Advertising had the temerity to refuse to supply Dillons on an ad hoc basis after receivership. Now Dillons is panicking dreadfully about what its old agency might reveal about it.

So much so that Dillons-Thorn EMI hired legal heavyweights Rowe and Maw to dash off a letter denying that any contract existed between Leisure and Thorn — and cheekily demanding a gagging confidentiality agreement covering disclosure of Dillons sales figures, profitability and business plans.

The urgency was revealed when the legal firm said: "Our clients are aware that Mr Braithwaite of your company [Leisure Advertising] is due to give a speech later this week at The Booksellers' Association Centenary Conference." Revelations in this forum would, the lawyers said, "be bound to be to the detriment of their relationships with suppliers".

Presumably the book chain's lawyers feared that a Mr *Paul* Braithwaite might exercise his right to free speech. In fact it was a Mr *Peter* Braithwaite of *The Good Book Guide* who was down to speak, and the dreaded word Dillons was never mentioned.

■ *IT IS not yet known if Bill Clinton, president of the United States, will seek advice from the aforementioned lawyers to see if he can legally stop Heinemann publishing the ghastly Robyn Sisman's novel, Special Relationship, next month.*

Its only claim to column inches is that the book features a ruthless American presidential race in the 90s. In interview with the book trade press, the American Robyn — ex-boss of Hutchinson — is now claiming not that she had an affair with Clinton when they were both at Oxford in the 60s but that she might have met him at the odd party. So do ex-publishers progress to being famous novelists...

☐ ONE of the main savings Tim Hely Hatchetman thought he could make when his Headline embraced Hodder & Stoughton in June 1993 was to cut back on the quality of paper and production values (not that they were above average) that Hodders employed.

His production director Sue "Bronco" Beavan assured him she could save the trade division £200,000 in the first financial year. But authors and agents began to complain, and many of the latter resolved not to sell their authors to Hodline.

Whereupon the indomitable Mary Tapissier, brought in from Pan Macmillan to run both the children's and religious divisions, swept into Hatchetman's office and delivered an ultimatum: either Bronco went, and instantly, or she did.

To the surprise of almost everyone, Cap'n Maxwell's disciple called Bronco into his inner sanctum and, with much weeping of crocodile tears and clutching of hands, Bronco was sacked on the spot.

'Bookworm'

footnotes

THE PERSECUTION OF PRIVATE PYLE

100 DAYS OF SOLITUDE: Graham Pyle

PRIVATE Graham Pyle of the Parachute Regiment has served 101 days in an army cell, mostly in solitary confinement, accused of two charges which have now been dropped.

Instead of apologising to him, compensating him or granting him his wish to be discharged, however, the army plans to court martial him for going absent without leave while suffering from stress after his wrongful imprisonment.

The army has seen a top psychiatrist's report which says that Graham Pyle is suffering from severe depression because of the "growing uncertainty about the nature of the charges against him and the lack of opportunity to prove his innocence". The report concludes that he is "not in a fit state to carry out his duties as a soldier" but the army keeps him on in active service in Belfast.

Graham Pyle joined the Parachute Regiment in 1989 and was due to be discharged in August 1993. In January 1993, he was falsely accused of attacking a friend and fellow-soldier while on a skiing trip in France. The assault was denied by several witnesses, including the victim. Nevertheless Pyle's discharge was postponed pending a court martial and he was sent to serve as a waiter in the officers' mess — a degrading posting.

He wrote to his MP and hired London lawyers. The charge of attacking his friend was dropped, but in November 1993 he was charged with stealing an officer's watch and placed under close arrest for two weeks. When he came out, despite his strong denials that he stole the watch, he was systematically insulted and victimised as a thief. He ran away from his barracks at Aldershot in January 1994. When he gave himself up six months later, he was placed under close arrest — solitary confinement — for 73 more days and was then sent on active service in Belfast where he is now.

A recent letter to his lawyers from Lt Col A. Lever of Army Legal Services says the theft charge has now been dropped as well. Instead, Col Lever writes, Pyle will be court martialled for absence without leave, and legal aid has been withdrawn. The court martial was due to be heard on 20 March, but after objections from Pyle's barrister, Paul Boateng MP, it has been postponed.

Meanwhile Pte Pyle continues on active service without any idea when he must next stand trial for an offence he says was caused by his extraordinary victimisation. Graham Pyle's father, an engineer from Exmouth in Devon, appeals to the *Eye* to publicise his son's case. "Up until the false assault charge, Graham had an exemplary army record," he says. "The Parachute Regiment was his career. Because of his disgraceful treatment, he has lost his career and his peace of mind. The army should release him and compensate him at once."

LOCKERBIE: New Mystery of the Red Tarpaulin

A MYSTERIOUS and anonymous note about the chaotic aftermath of the 1988 bombing of an airliner over Lockerbie arrives at the *Eye*.

It alleges that a team of searchers, led by a Mr Ron Smith of Scottish Woodlands Ltd, was combing the area round Lockerbie after the bombing when it came across a "large red tarpaulin concealing something". The note continues: "On trying to look underneath they were warned off by armed personnel."

Ron Smith, of Scottish Woodlands, Castle Douglas, Galloway, tells the *Eye* that he was *not* involved in this incident, but he is sure that it happened. "I was working with a team from Galloway Mountain Rescue," he says. "There were hundreds of rescue workers out after the bombing hunting for bodies. After searching all day, we would go back to the school at Lockerbie and compare notes.

"On one of the days after the bombing — I can't remember which day, but it was certainly before Christmas [the bombing was on 21 December] — we were told that a search team had come across a huge red or orange tarpaulin in an open field. It covered a large box or container — far larger than a recording box or anything like that. Above the tarpaulin hovered a helicopter. A man with a gun stood in the door waving away anyone who approached the tarpaulin.

"Naturally no one went near it. When searchers went back to the scene the next day, they reported nothing but a large hole. The tarpaulin and the container had vanished. It certainly could not have been removed except by a large vehicle, yet there were no track marks in the field. They concluded that the container must have been lifted away in the air. The talk among searchers at the time was that the container had been loaded at Heathrow, and that this was one reason why the plane took off late."

A spokeswoman for UK Families Flight 103, which represents families of Britons who died at Lockerbie, told the *Eye*: "This is a revelation. Nothing about a tarpaulin or a container came out at the fatal accident inquiry, which lasted four months. We really know little or nothing about the cargo of the plane. We will be demanding to know more about this from the government."

CORRECTION CORNER

IN THE Footnotes of 30 December last year in an article about defence contractors, it was reported that Mr Peter Elsey joined the board of a defence company set up by Mr Richard Tonge. This information was put to the ministry of defence, who made no comment on it. Mr Elsey writes to say that he never joined any such board — and he proves it. Sorry for the mistake.

HEADS YOU LOSE

■ THE GOVERNMENT'S faltering campaign to persuade schools to opt out of council control strode another smart step backwards when Chris Hampson, headmaster of St James's Church School, Bolton, was suspended on 8 March because of "certain administrative matters".

Oh dear. St James's is considered such a model of opt-out that it provides a local office for the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation, which gets taxpayers' money to make propaganda about the enormous administrative advantages in opting out.

Chris Hampson is not to be confused with another very keen opt-out headmaster, David Hampson of Waltham Toll Bar, a comprehensive in Grimsby. He has never recovered from a parents' ballot in 1991 in which 533 voted in favour of his campaign for opting out — and 1,395 voted against.

For nearly four years Mr David Hampson struggled to persuade parents of the errors of their ways and the advantages of opting out. At long last, amid much rejoicing, he persuaded the governors to order another ballot. The result has just come in: 549 for opting out and just 1,326 against.

The Power v. the Tory

THE government's campaign for the local elections was launched by John Gummer, the environment secretary, who gushed on at length about the "invaluable contribution" made to the country's political life by Tory councillors.

AMAZED: Cllr Tony Dalton

Gummer's ministry's staunch support for his own councillors has recently been in evidence at Warwick district council, where the Tories are desperately defending a majority of three.

The council recently dealt with a planning application from the newly-privatised electricity generating monopoly Powergen, which wants to build an out-of-town supermarket and petrol station between Warwick and Leamington.

The proposal was greeted with universal horror in both towns. Shop owners and customers, especially those without cars, were worried about the threat to trade. There was very poor access to the centre, which presented huge traffic problems. There is already a huge retail park just down the road, which has helped depopulate the centre of Warwick. Councillors of all persuasions were worried that the same thing would happen to Leamington.

Planning officials strongly recommended refusal. The councillors on the planning committee agreed, unanimously. Unabashed, Powergen appealed to Mr Gummer's department, whose inspector ignored all local opinion and approved outline planning permission. Thus the monopoly got its way against the express will of an elected Conservative authority.

Tony Dalton, Tory leader at Warwick, told the *Eye*: "We think its absolutely bloody nuts."

DERIVATIVES: THE THINGS HE SAID

"ONE has to be careful because one can sound complacent, and we are not. We now have an expert team monitoring derivatives who are getting even better every time they go in to see a firm. What they are reporting back from the most active players in the market is very reassuring. These people know what they are doing whether its at director level or the chaps on the desk."

Eddie George, governor of the Bank of England, *Observer*, 24 July 1994.

BLACKBOARD BUNGLE

IRRITATED BY a multi-billion pound government pension scheme which works, education secretary Gillian Shephard is determined to privatise its management.

All the teachers' organisations and pretty well all the 390 workers at the Teachers Pensions Agency (TPA) in Darlington are horrified by the government's determination to privatise the running of the agency.

The agency has recently passed the government's own efficiency targets with flying colours. Its scheme, which every year pays out billions of pounds in pensions from teachers' direct contributions, is fair and competent.

In the late 1980s, seduced by new laws promoted by the private pensions and insurance industry and shoved through parliament by the then secretary of state for social services Norman Fowler and his junior minister John Major, 31,500 teachers opted out of the scheme. Of these, 8,500, after realising their mistake, have opted back in again. Hundreds of others are suing banks and insurance companies for the mis-selling of private pensions. Teachers were made a special target for the great private pensions swindle of the late 1980s and are therefore specially keen that their occupational scheme stays in public hands.

Plans to privatise the running of the scheme were approved by a report by the big accountancy firm KPMG — one of the biggest City beneficiaries of privatisation. The KPMG report does not produce a single tangible argument in favour of privatisation of the TPA, except to hint that a private management might be tougher in sacking people. The *Eye* asked the department for education if it was true that as soon as KPMG reported in favour of privatisation, it was hired once more by the government to assist with that privatisation. The department replied:

"Since they presented their findings we have sought advice from them on operational questions which would be relevant to a decision by a minister whether or not to proceed with the letting of the contract for the administration of the scheme". In a word: yes.

PS: The privatisation of the TPA has had the enthusiastic support of Mr Ken Edis, of UPS International, a specialist pension fund company. "There are," he told the *Times Educational Supplement* on 3 March, "specialists who can do the job better and cheaper."

UPS designed and programmed the software for an attempt not long ago by Hoskyns, another specialist firm in the field, to assist the TPA with a new computer system. The Hoskyns project was not an outstanding success. It was scrapped. The firm is suing the TPA... and the TPA is countersuing. Which all goes to show that it's not only accountants who can make money from privatisation. Lawyers can too.

COLVER'S FIRST STAND

HUGH COLVER CBE has all the qualities necessary to serve as the new press officer for the Tory party: he played a heroic role, for example, in the great battle between the ministry of defence and Thames Television over the 1988 programme *Death on the Rock*.

Part of that programme dealt with the journey by three IRA members in a white car from Malaga to Gibraltar where they were killed by the SAS. When the programme was shown, a mighty ballyhoo of outrage was set up in 10 Downing Street and the Murdoch press. Thames TV agreed to and paid for an independent commission of inquiry by Lord Windlesham and Richard Rampton QC. The inquiry carefully investigated the sequence about the journey of the white car. Thames TV reporters said their account had been partly confirmed by a press briefing at the MoD before the programme went out. Hugh Colver, who was chief press officer at the ministry, was summoned to give evidence. On tape, out loud, Colver said there had been no briefing of Thames reporters before the programme went out.

That seemed to be the end of the matter, and curtains for Thames. But then a strange thing happened. A brigadier called Sam Cowan, who was then chief press officer of the army, was contacted by the *Observer* newspaper. He agreed at once that there had indeed been a press briefing of Thames before the programme. He knew about it because he was one of the two officers who had given the briefing. The other was Hugh Colver.

Cowan's evidence is said to have shaken Windlesham and Rampton. From that moment on they were inclined to believe what they were told by Thames, but to be rather less certain of what they heard from the ministry of defence.

THE BILL PAYS THE BILL

■ **PRODIGIOUS efforts were made by the expensive lawyers employed by the Metropolitan police to block publicity of the case of Terry Ajakaiye, who sued the police under the race relations act alleging that officers at Shooters Hill and Plumstead police stations south-east London discriminated against him.**

Mr Ajakaiye had gone to the police to report the theft of his car radio — only to be questioned about his (perfectly legal) immigration status, handcuffed and locked up for three hours.

Police lawyers argued that police officers (unlike anyone else in the country) are not bound by the anti-discrimination clauses of the race relations act. They said they were prepared to pay compensation to Mr Ajakaiye, provided there was no publicity. They were not successful. The story of Mr Ajakaiye's court victory appeared in the papers on 17 March.

Strangely, however, the officers chiefly responsible for the outrage were not named. The desk officer at Shooters Hill station, where the plaintiff was first questioned, was PC Andrew Waitt, and the custody officer at Plumstead police station where Mr Ajakaiye was locked up was PS Nicholas Kemp. Neither man — nor anyone else — has been disciplined for this incident. Nor has there been a word of apology.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Cecil Court

In the City

AWARE that the ever growing clamour for senior suits to pay the price for Nick Leeson will not be silenced, the Barings hierarchy and new owners ING appear to be preparing the ground to toss overboard the two men in London most responsible for the £900 million Singapore black hole: head derivatives dealer Ron Baker and investment banking chief Peter Norris.

This pair, plus chairman Peter Baring, who is due to retire anyway, face likely criticism from the Bank of England investigation. The hope would seem to be that dumping on them, and on James Bax and Simon Jones in Singapore, will satisfy the demand for well-paid heads to roll.

But while the case for sacking those so closely involved in not supervising Nick Leeson is unanswerable — how much Peter Baring knew of these problems before the end remains to be seen — the role of Barings deputy chairman Andrew Tuckey should not be allowed to be obscured by the failings and culpabilities of his underlings Norris and Baker.

As head of Barings Brothers, Tuckey (1993 salary and profit share: £1.6 million) was responsible for bringing Norris back into the Bishopsgate fold from Goldman Sachs and promoting him. Their closeness is such that Norris is nicknamed "Blue Peter", so firmly was he attached to the Tuckey rear.

Certainly "Blue Peter" seems resigned to his fate. Shortly before his demotion to adviser from the new management committee to run the bank was announced (Baker is not even an adviser) he was reported to have been filling several large plastic bags with papers from his office. If true, any such papers were doubtless on their way to Bank of England investigators.

That Norris should feel he is about to take the fall is no surprise to Barings insiders who talk of his arrogance and ignorance of securities dealing. They also suggest it was Norris who, when challenged about Leeson's ever bigger gambles on the Japanese market by Dermot Kelly (deputy chairman of Barings Securities) at management committee meetings from last October onwards, brushed aside the concerns. He was reportedly supported in this by Tuckey, who similarly has no background in either dealing or derivatives.

But then Tuckey, like his protégé, and Baker all stood to benefit greatly from the profits bonus Leeson's dealings generated in Singapore. And the higher up the chain, the bigger the bonus. So Tuckey would have received even more than Norris who would have received even more than Baker. For 1993 10 Barings Brothers directors received salaries with bonuses of more than £500,000.

The accumulating evidence of just how much was known in London about the potential Doomsday machine Leeson had built in Singapore makes it very difficult to see how Tuckey can survive, particularly if Peter Baring is also forced on to his Mont Blanc. The chain of command, information and responsibility runs clearly all the way from Leeson in Singapore through Baker and Norris to Tuckey in Bishopsgate. Whatever Peter Baring knew, he would have known mostly from Tuckey who was chairman of the bank and his annointed successor as head of the group.

So far ING has signalled that it has no problem with Tuckey — pending the Bank of England's findings. But it seems hard to believe that these will give Tuckey any more of a reason not to have to go than his protégé "Blue Peter". Especially as it was they who hired Baker and also so misrepresented the crisis to the Bank of England and so antagonised the engathered lifeboat crew that the Bank felt unable to mount a rescue.

That decision by governor Eddie George is now seen to have been a catastrophic mistake as far as the reputation of London as an international financial centre is concerned. It has caused a major loss of confidence abroad in even the biggest merchant banks. After all, if Barings, the oldest City merchant bank, is not safe or worth saving, who is? What about Rothschilds, Warburgs, Schroders or Kleinworts? George and his advisers seem to have been oblivious to the knock-on impact of allowing Barings to fail.

The extent of the Bank's error has been embarrassingly rammed home by the relative ease with which the Singapore and Japanese authorities were able to organise the capping of the Leeson losses at something under £900 million — about £200 million more than the final fateful estimate from Tuckey and Norris. And that figure was exceeded largely due to the failure of any rescue to be completed before the Far Eastern markets opened, whereupon the Japanese market collapsed on fears of the unloading of the Barings positions.

Once the losses had been capped with the aid of just two Japanese securities houses, a lone Dutch financial group was able to do what the combined might of the Bank of England and the City banks was unable to achieve — take the hit in Singapore and put Barings back in business worldwide.

So why was this beyond Fast Eddie and his team of talent? Well, as the embarrassing quotes from his interview with the *Observer* last year (see Footnotes) prove, the governor has no idea what derivatives dealing and its risks are all about. And within the Bank there is no derivatives expertise.

It would also appear that George's deputy, Rupert Pennant-Rea, who knew the square root of nothing about banking period after a career in journalism, may have been a little preoccupied that weekend. His former mistress had already started circulating tales of their affair to newspapers at least a week before the Barings bomb went off.

Misinformed by Barings and unable to rely on any in-house expertise, George and his supposed supervisors compounded their errors by failing to reach out for help from those who did know about derivatives. An approach could have been made, say bankers, to one of the big American players such as Morgan or George Soros to get them to take over the Barings positions and gamble on dealing out at a profit. With a Bank guarantee limiting any loss and a deal done before Japan opened for business, bankers believe a deal could have been done — as it was within days — that would have enabled the lifeboat to be launched and the City's reputation to be saved. Instead Barings was allowed to sink, taking London with it.

Legal note: it would appear that the Serious Farce Office may not be entirely enthusiastic to take over a prosecution of Nick Leeson. At present its position seems more dominated by a need to ensure that there is a case to answer should the German courts decide Singapore, with its hang 'em, flog 'em policy, means too much hard time for Leeson and so refuse to extradite.

A free Leeson arriving in London would require instant action. But the SFO is also only too aware of the difficulties of prosecuting over offences masterminded or committed from outside Britain. It might want a guaranteed guilty plea before doing any deal with Leeson. But no such plea can ever be guaranteed; and imagine the embarrassment if Leeson were returned to London only to argue that he could only be tried in Singapore! So the SFO may be happy to allow Singapore to have Leeson if the Germans agree.

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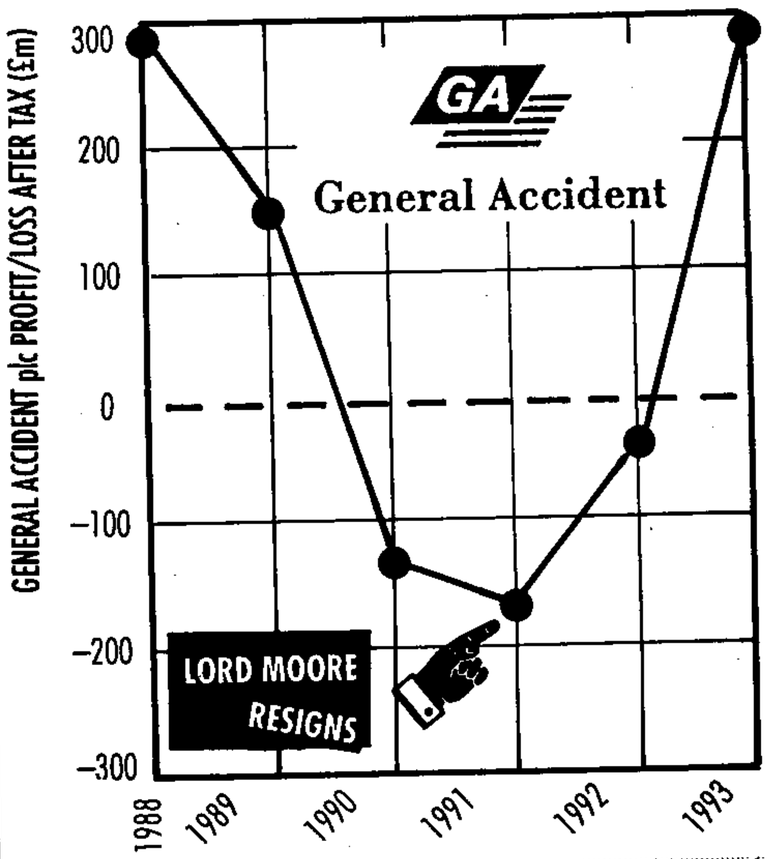

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Observer, 16 October 1994

THE DIRECTORS

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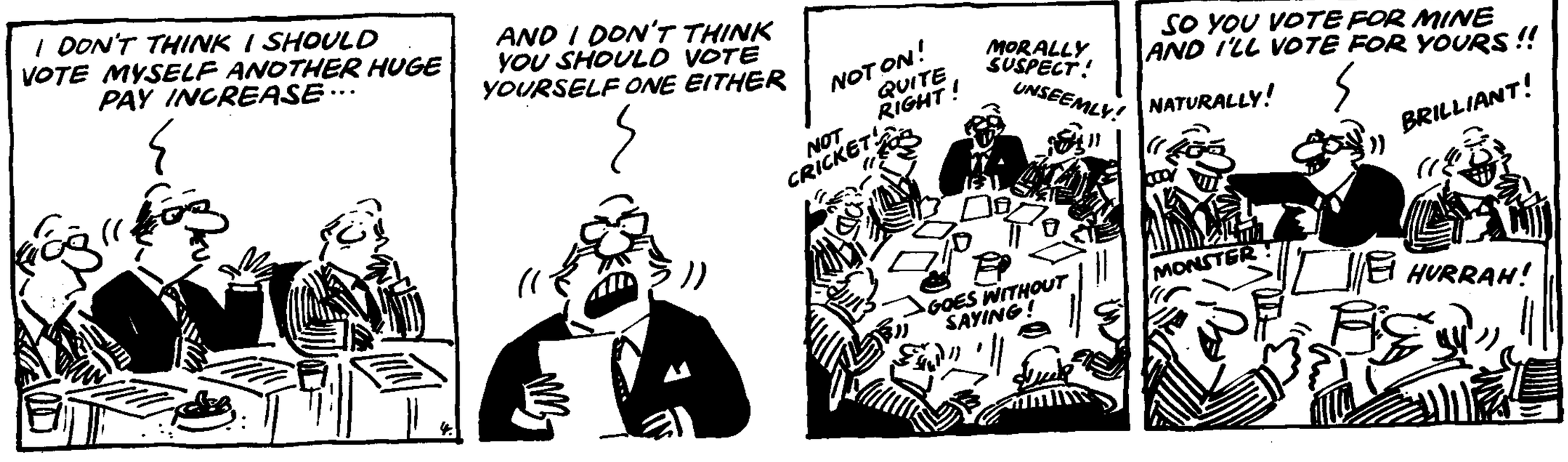

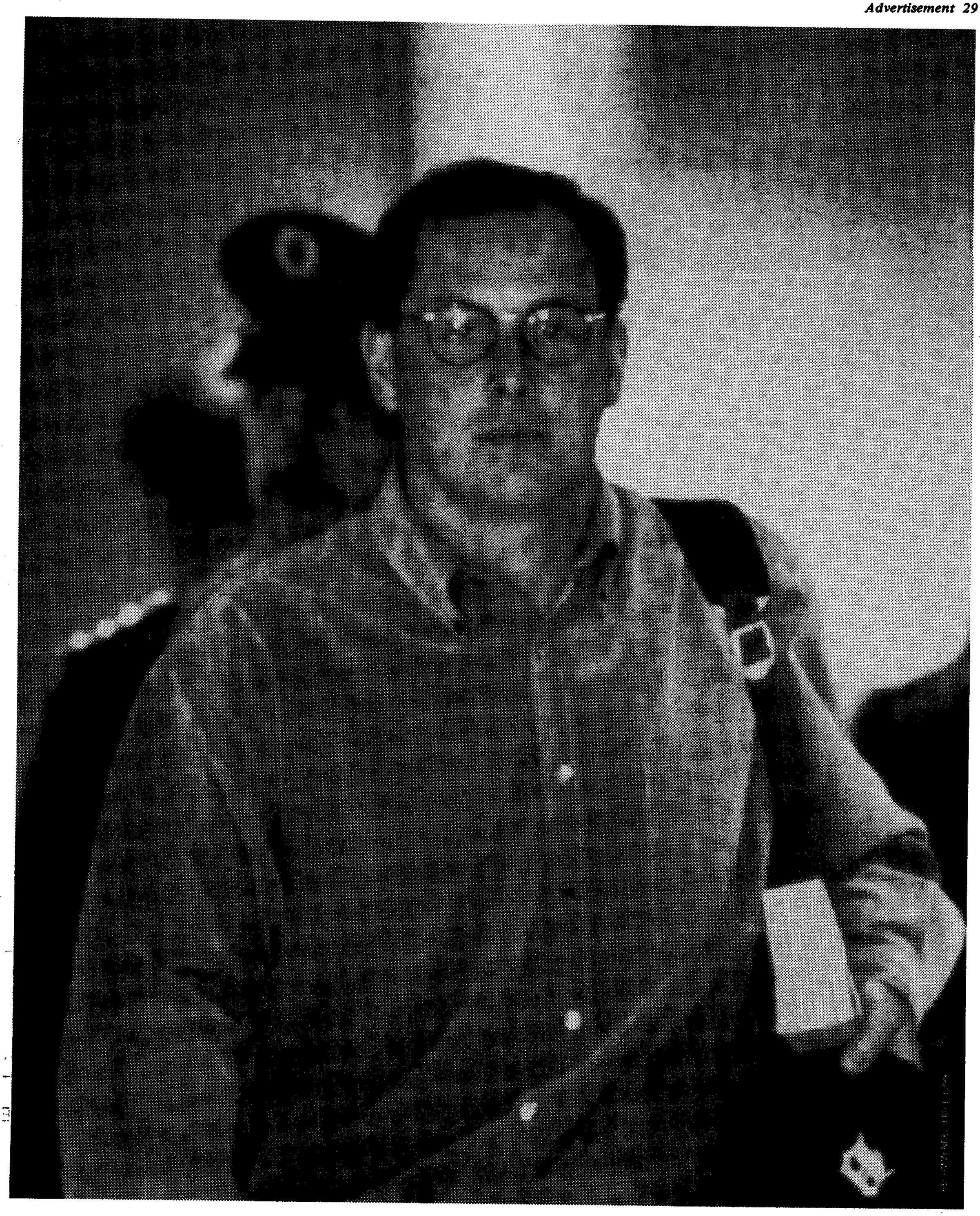

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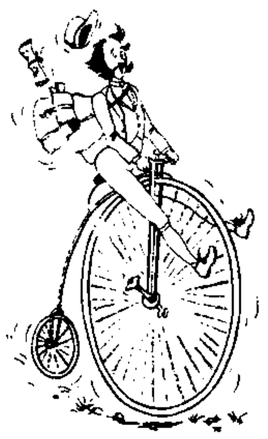

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SPEECH WRITING by Mitch Murray. See Page 30.

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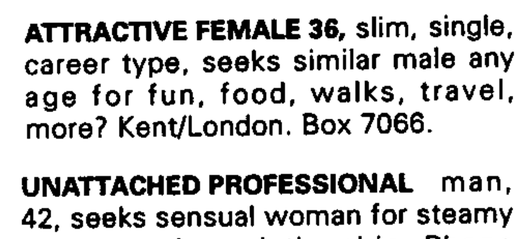

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BORED BY SEX? Romantic, lively, attractive, humorous, irreverent thinking woman, 50s, seeks stimulating grown-up man for platonic rapport. Photo please. Box 2666.

SCRUFFY ARTIST, 37, tall, kind, unconventional. Seeks small, sexy lady. London/S.E. Box 3167.

LANGUAGE SCHOOL DIRECTOR, forties, seeks hedonistic female for discreet meetings. Box 3267.

LENNON LOOKALIKE, 30 seeks hedonistic, nimble fingered girl to strum his guitar. Box 1068.

LADY GRADUATE, 30 seeks n/s, single male, 25-35 5'10" plus, for romance, intrigue and more. Photo please. South. Box 1168.

SLIM, PETITE, sexy 22-35. That's you. Me businessman, attractive, 42. Discreet, generous, lets have fun. Hants. Box 1268.

GENUINE SINCERE professional male, 37, seeks caring unattached female for committed relationship. Personality, intelligence are important, looks and build are not. Box 6066.

PRETTY WOMAN (44, respectable profession) seeks Richard Gere. Carlisle/Newcastle. Box 7166.

GOODLOOKING PROFESSIONAL guy, 35, seeks attractive companion 20-30 for friendship. Herts/Essex. Box 2966.

DISCREET BUT UNATTACHED single male 38 seeks intelligent sensual lady for love, laughter, sex and more. Box 3866.

ARE YOU AN "otherwise happily", safely married lady under 42 who would enjoy a "sometimes man" for daytime sessions of ecstasy and passion? Millionaire businessman, 42, tall, dark and "nearly, but not quite" handsome, educated, intelligent, reliable, discreet, safely but "otherwise happily" married will love to hear from you. Photo if possible, please. Daytime telephone number essential for discreet initial conversation. Absolute discretion assured and expected. Is anybody out there? Box 1263.

ARTISTIC MAN, 45 years, seeks desirable lady. Box 1265.

SUCCESSFUL BUILDER (LEEDS) requires lady (25-35) for horizontal development. Must have good foundations and plenty of scaffolding. Box 5666.

ATTRACTIVE SLIM WOMAN 38 seeks officer for discreet dalliance. Gloucestershire. Box 5567.

STRIKINGLY ATTRACTIVE, formidably clever, ironically serious woman, 29, interests: Bach, Bunuel, Elizabeth David, Gibbon, Guerlain, Lampedusa, seeks similar man, 30s, London/South West. Box 5667.

ATTRACTIVE UNATTACHED professional male, 40s, non-smoker, GSOH, seeks room/flat share, central London — preferably with sensuous eclectic landlady/flat-mate. Box 5767.

6'3" MAN, blue eyes, well-travelled seeks young lady for fun and adventure back-packing in South America. Telephone 01234 219776.

MAN OF THE MOMENT? Ex-rock guitarist, early 40s but looks boyish, seeks partner for the great times ahead. You: lively, luscious, left of centre. Me: Keen, optimistic, and willing to change to make things work. N/S, respects women. Try me, you might like the difference. Box 1867.

DENNIS THE MENACE seeks Minnie the Minx or similar tom-boy for romantic capers. Box 1967.

SHAMEFULLY OVERLOOKED man, 45, would love to hear from any woman, anywhere, interested in love, romance and parrots. Photo (not of parrot) appreciated. Wolverhampton. Box 2067.

CRAZY FOR YOU. Gadzooks! Zany funster into wild parties, practical jokes, loves the Goons, Python etc, but needs seriously wacky lady to share a lifetime of laughs. Connections to nobility, but who cares? Gang up with me and anything could happen! Wa-hee! Box 2167.

ATTRACTIVE BLONDE with wit, style and personality, 30s, seeks dark, handsome male counterpart. Nationality unimportant, photo essential! Box 2267.

ATTRACTIVE CONTINENTAL lady, early 50s, loosely attached seeks n/s active professional gentleman to rediscover love and excitement. 5'10" plus 53-63. Kent/South East London area. Box 5067.

TALL, EDUCATED MAN 33, reads, dines, travels, cooks, but also drinks, works and smokes. Seeks woman to enjoy or tolerate the above. Longish letter appreciated. London. Box 5167.

ARTICULATE, AMUSING, presentable single male professional, 39, seeking attractive, alluring and interesting lady (18-41) for cultural and other happenings. Photo and phone essential. Box 5267.

GENTLEMAN LATE 30S, tall, educated, considerate, seeks warm, sexy lady (35-55) for very discreet relationship. London. Box 5367.

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BORN IN THE FORTIES — Remember the 60s — how about fun in the 90s? Attractive tied lady would like to meet very discreet like-minded gentleman. London area. Box 3367.

EXCEPTIONALLY HANDSOME, upmarket fortysomething, married City professional seeks very attractive, married woman for discreet relationship. London. Box 3467.

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DOUBLE WHAMMY, beautiful, successful, international American businesswoman seeks male equivalent. Ring 0660 204052

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EXPLORE the Mysteries of the Universe! Scientist, mid 30s, tall and slim, seeks wonderful, academic woman for walks and talks, learning and loving. Ring 0660 204178

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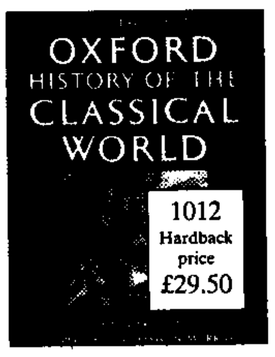

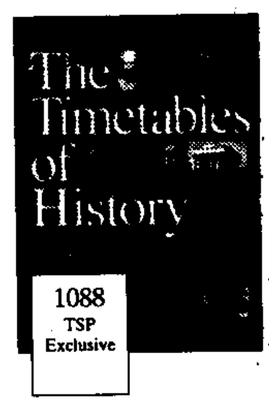

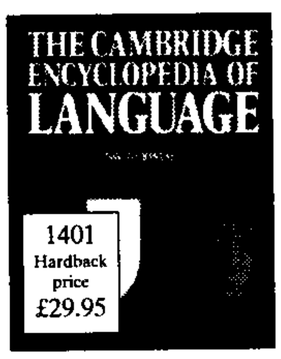

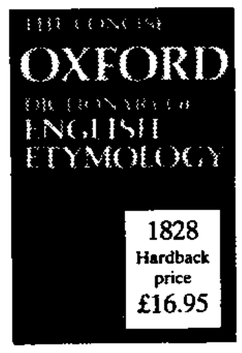

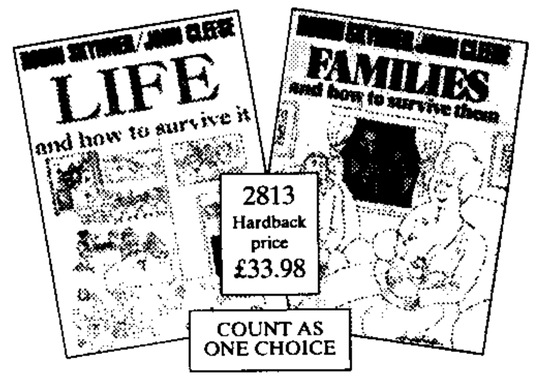

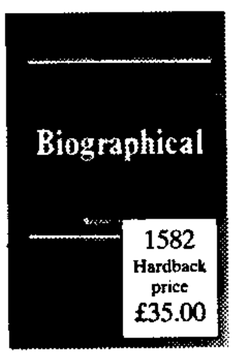

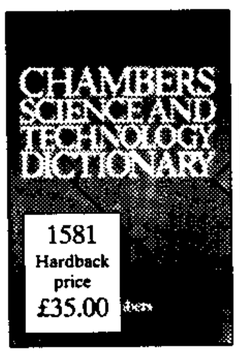

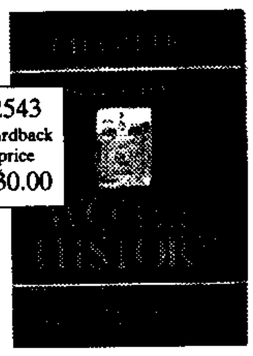

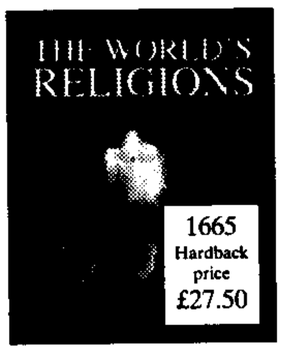

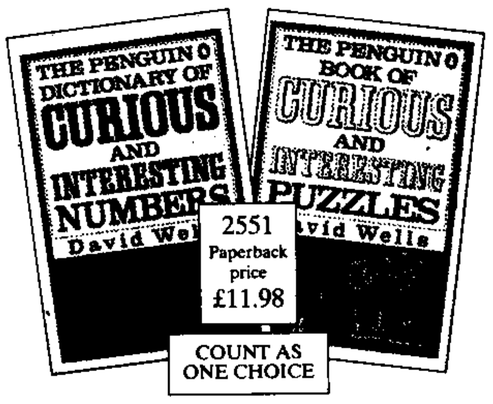

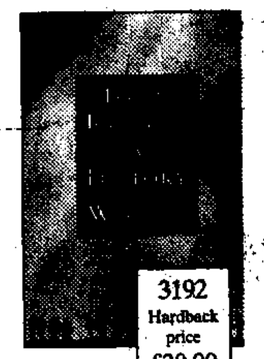

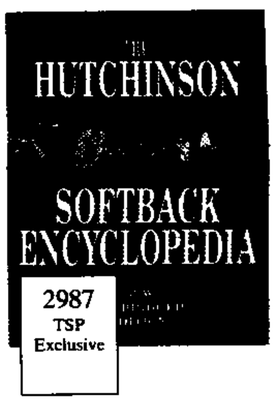

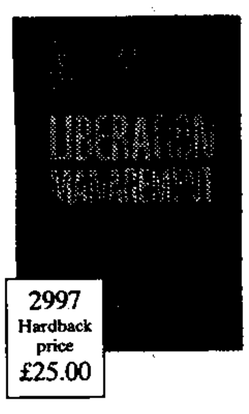

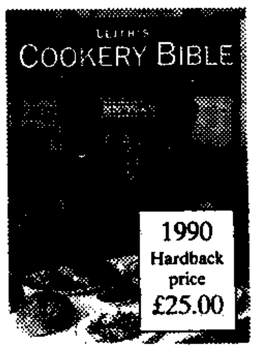

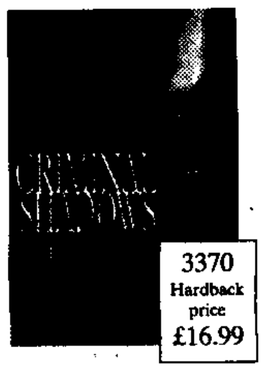

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